

# STARS AND STRIPES<sup>®</sup>

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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2004

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# Army officers may get less time to relocate

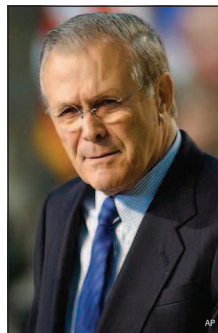
War, reorganization could leave some with as little as 45 days to move Page 4

## Escaping into video games Page 8



Spc. Criss Sanders, left, trounces Spc. Robert McKinney and Pfc. David Ustry in a video game of Halo in a trailer at Camp Liberty, on the outskirts of Baghdad. Like the teenagers and college students across America who sit on couches late on weekend nights and into the next morning, servicemembers spend free hours on the outskirts of the Iraqi capital killing one another in PlayStation2 and Xbox games such as Halo and Mortal Kombat.

THE WASHINGTON POST/ATW



**Rumsfeld to now personally sign letters of condolence to troops' families**

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## STARS &amp; STRIPES

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## News Tracker ... What's new with old news

## States

**Racist vandalism hoax:** A former psychology professor at Claremont McKenna College in California was sentenced Wednesday to a year in state prison for spraying her car with racist and anti-Semitic slurs and claiming that unknown vandals had done it. Kerri Dunn, 40, of Redlands had faced up to three years' imprisonment.

"Professor Dunn ... will be appealing this matter," he said.

She was arrested after two witnesses told police they saw Dunn vandalize her vehicle and after investigators found inconsistencies in her statements.

A jury convicted her Aug. 18 of two felony counts of attempted insurance fraud and one count of filing a false police report.

**Colo. wildfire sentence:** A Denver appeals court on Thursday threw out a 12-year state prison sentence given to former forestry worker Terry Lynn Barton for starting the largest wildfire in Colorado history, saying the judge gave her too long a term.

The Colorado Court of Appeals also said state District Judge Edward Colt, who presided over Barton's case, had at least "the appearance of prejudice" because smoke from the wildfire forced him to leave his own home for a night.

The court ordered a new sentencing hearing before a new judge.

Barton pleaded guilty to state arson charges for setting 2002 fire that eventually blackened 138,000 acres, destroyed 300 buildings and caused property damage in excess of \$29 million.

**R.I. nightclub fire:** More than half of the 177 clubs in Rhode Island must install sprinklers under the new fire safety code passed in the aftermath of the deadly Station nightclub fire.

A new statewide survey compiled by the state fire marshal's office says 95 clubs do not meet the new sprinkler requirement, and 55 of those clubs also lack a newly required alarm system that automatically notifies the local fire department when the alarm sounds.

The fire marshal's study, released Wednesday by the governor's office, found that 69 clubs already meet both the sprinkler and alarm requirements.

**Robert Blake case:** The judge in Robert Blake's Los Angeles murder case Wednesday reversed herself and decided to allow parts of recorded jailhouse conversations to be used at the trial, including one in which Blake referred to the family of his slain wife as "monsters."

Superior Court Judge Darlene Schemp also permitted use of a segment of a February 2003 jailhouse interview the former "Barrett" television star gave journalist Barbara Walters.

Last week, Schemp had barred the prosecution from using the material but agreed to listen to the recordings and reconsider.

## World

**Stolen paintings:** One of two paintings by Edvard Munch stolen from an Oslo, Nor-



**Romanian presidential race:** President-elect Traian Basescu, right, shakes hands with outgoing President Ion Iliescu, as the head of the Constitutional Court looks on Thursday in Bucharest, during the ceremony of validation for the new president. Basescu, a former sea captain who rose to prominence as mayor of Bucharest, won a presidential runoff election on Sunday, defeating Prime Minister Adrian Nastase. He will be sworn in next week.

way, museum earlier this year was seriously damaged, a newspaper reported Thursday.

Citing what it called multiple independent sources familiar with the art world, as well as criminal sources, newspaper Verdens Gang reported that the "Maddona" had been ruined.

In August, three masked robbers, including at least one with a pistol, took "The Scream" and "Maddona" from Oslo's Munch Museum and fled in a stolen car.

The robbery shook the art world and left it to ponder how it protects priceless paintings and other works of art.

Police Inspector Iver Stensrud told the NTB news agency that investigators were aware of the rumors.

**Bali bombing trial:** A jailed Afghan-trained militant told a court Thursday in Jakarta, Indonesia, that cleric Abu Bakar Bashir became the leader of the Jemaah Islamiyah terror network in 2000, but that he never heard Bashir talk about terrorism.

"I got a telephone call in 2000 that Abu Bakar Bashir was the new amir (leader) of Jemaah Islamiyah," said Imron Baihaki, who claims that he was in southern Philippines at that time. He said he got the call from a Jemaah Islamiyah operative.

It was doubtful that the statement would be strong enough to support prosecutors' charge that Bashir — as leader of the al-Qaida affiliate — inspired his followers to launch the Oct. 12, 2002, Bali bombings that killed 202 people and last year's attack on the J.W. Marriott hotel in Jakarta, that killed 12.

If convicted, Bashir could be sentenced to death.

**Afghan child soldiers:** Nearly half of Afghanistan's estimated 8,000 child soldiers have been demobilized and are going

through educational programs and vocational training aimed at preparing them to rejoin society, the U.N. Children's Fund said Thursday.

The year-old program has targeted 15 northern, northeastern and central provinces. UNICEF said it now hopes to expand into the south, southwest and a country that is still fighting Taliban and al-Qaida insurgents three years after the collapse of the Taliban's headline regime.

So far, 3,998 boys, mostly ages 14-17, have been demobilized.

**Bobby Fischer residency:** Iceland has approved a residency permit for Bobby Fischer, embassy officials said Thursday, but the former chess champion faces hurdles in traveling there because he remains in Japanese custody and lacks a valid passport.

Fischer is wanted in the United States on charges of violating international sanctions against Yugoslavia, and has been detained since July 13 in Tokyo where he has been fighting a deportation order to the United States.

It was not immediately clear if he would be able to travel to Iceland.

Fischer soared to fame when he defeated Boris Spassky of the Soviet Union in a series of games in Reykjavik, Iceland, in 1972.

Fischer is accused of violating the sanctions when he played a rematch in Yugoslavia in 1992 against longtime rival Spassky.

He won and took home \$3.5 million in prize money.

Stories and photos from wire services



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# Phantom Regiment Off to Belgium for battle anniversary

BY TERRY BOYD  
Stars and Stripes

BAUMHOLDER, Germany — At about 11 a.m. Thursday, Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph Hall looked at the wall clock in his office.

At this moment 60 years ago, Hall mused, commanders are turning the 10th Armored Division toward Bastogne, Belgium, after a 5:30 a.m. German artillery barrage launches the Battle of the Bulge.

"Sixty years ago right now, a whole bunch of [U.S.] units are getting shellacked and trying to figure out what was going on," said Hall, sergeant major for the 1st Armored Division's 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment at Baumholder.

For Hall, Bastogne is far more than just a history lesson or dates on a calendar. In his mind's eye, he can see it happening now.

When Hall is not in the Army of 2004, the historian and military memorabilia collector leads about a dozen 1st AD soldiers in the Phantom Regiment, re-creating the Army of 1944.

This weekend, the 60th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, should be one for the books, he said.

"First of all, we've been working on it for a while," he said. "Second, of all the re-enactors there, we'll be one of only a handful of American [groups]."

About 14 Phantom Regiment members are heading about 100 miles northwest to Bastogne from Baumholder for the commemoration. They're taking an M-3 halftrack as well as an M4A1 Sherman tank — one of seven vintage tanks slated to take part in a planned 12-mile tank road trek, Hall said. That's just one of several weekend events, including a Sunday wreath-laying and the annual walk around the perimeter of the Bastogne battlefield.

The Phantom Regiment will take its armor courtesy of Bastogne organizers, who are paying about \$8,000 for transport, and the 1st Armored Division Museum at H.D. Smith Barracks, which owns it. Hall and his group store and maintain both vehicles.

Hall and the Phantom Regiment — an Army-authorized, nonprofit group — have close ties to the museum, says curator Steven R. Ruhnke.

Phantom Regiment historical re-creations provide educational services about the division, Ruhnke says. Moreover, the Phantom Regiment helps keep up two historically important vehicles.

"The worst thing you do to them is let them sit," Ruhnke said.

Nearly all the rest of the World War II equipment, uniforms and weapons Phantom soldiers display belong to Hall, a longtime collector. However, a new member, Spc. Carl Stahl, also with the battalion, was a re-enactor in the States and received his equipment just in time for Bastogne.

In the Battle of the Bulge, the last great German offensive of World War II, a Dec. 16 surprise attack in the Ardennes forests of Belgium and Luxembourg created a "bulge" in Allied lines. The opening German barrage wiped out the Allied command and control, and soldiers were left to fend for themselves against the German onslaught, Hall said.

"It was all small-unit action ... which is what they were taught to do. They were encircled," he

added. U.S. forces held and the Germans failed to break out and seize their objective, the port of Antwerp.

Though the 10th AD and the 101st Airborne Division are celebrated for holding off superior German forces until Allied air forces could defeat them, it was the 28th Infantry Division that, despite being overwhelmed, held long enough for reinforcements to stop the offensive, Hall said.

The two-year-old Phantom Regiment is once again hitting stride after the 1st AD's return from Iraq last July.

Phantom Regiment soldiers already have put on historical displays, including an October demonstration titled "The Defense of Castellaccio." It re-created a four-day stand in October 1944 by a 1st AD company fighting in Italy against a battalion-size German force. On Thanksgiving Day, Hall and company took the Sherman tank to Baumholder's post exchange parking lot and drew a steady crowd of young soldiers.

A young soldier in civilian clothes eyed the Sherman, then Pfc. Edward Thrasher, a Phantom Regiment member who is all of 20 years old.

"Thrasher, trust you with that thing?" the kid asked.

Oh, yeah. As a Phantom Regiment soldier, Thrasher is entitled to all the benefits and hard work that goes into depicting the accomplishments of the 1st AD's fight against the Germans.

"There are not many people who can say they rode in a Sherman tank," Thrasher said.

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PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes

American Battle of the Bulge veterans, their families and guests listen to speeches at Schumann's Corner, near Wiltz, Luxembourg. Thursday marked the 60th anniversary of the beginning of the World War II battle.

## Remembering the Battle of the Bulge

Some 200 people gathered Thursday morning at a war memorial at Schumann's Corner, near Wiltz, Luxembourg, for the first of four days of events marking the start of the Battle of the Bulge 60 years ago. Schumann's Corner, the scene of heavy fighting during the battle, was one of several sites across Luxembourg and eastern Belgium that hosted events after an early morning vigil. The hour-long ceremony was attended by three busloads of World War II veterans and



Hershel Harper served with Company L, 104th Infantry, 26th Division during World War II.



A joint honor guard of soldiers from Mannheim, Germany, and sailors from Rota, Spain, present the colors at the ceremony.

their families, plus Secretary of the Air Force James Roche, who was among the official speakers. Many in the group will be attending events this weekend in Bastogne, Belgium, and elsewhere.



Above: George Chekan, the national president of the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge Association, salutes as he sings the national anthem.

Below: Petty Officer 2nd Class James Raasch of the 6th Fleet Band out of Naples, Italy, plays taps at the ceremony.





# Army PCS orders may take drastic change

Officers may receive as little as 45 days' notice instead of the normal 120 to 180, officials say

BY LISA BURGESS

Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — Some Army officers and their families may now have as little as 45 days' notice to report to a new duty station, according to service personnel officials.

The change is being driven by the "near-term turbulence" of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the Army's simultaneous reorganization, said Lt. Col. Kevin Arata, a spokesman for the Human Resources Command.

Traditionally, officers received 120 to 180 days notification for permanent change of station, or PCS, Arata said.

The system could affect about 51,000 active-duty Army officers and 11,000 warrant officers between now and the end of fiscal 2005 in October, Arata said.

Arata estimated that some 13.5 percent, or 8,400 officers, will be affected. Those who won't include JAGs, chaplains, doctors and veterinarians, whose assignments are not managed by the same personnel office.

As was first reported by The (Baltimore) Sun on Dec. 8, the Army's Human Resources Command's Officer Operations Division started notifying the first group of about 2,100 officers in September that they would need to PCS on short notice.

Two more groups will receive similar notifications in fiscal 2005, with the next letters starting to go out the first week of January, Arata said.

As it became clear earlier this year that Iraq deployments would continue until 2006 or longer, Army leaders decided to change the officer reassignment system, which filled vacancies on a more or less random basis, Arata said.

Instead, the leaders decided that units that are deployed or about to deploy would get priority when it came to filling officer vacancies, Arata said.

And because things come up in units preparing for Iraq or Afghanistan, Arata said, such a system meant that officers destined for the war units would probably receive much less notice to PCS.

For example, a lieutenant may break his leg during predeployment training, and as a result, his replacement would need to move quickly to take command of his new platoon.

But because such last-minute requirements rarely occur in large numbers, "most officers will continue receive 120 and 180 days notice on pending PCS moves," Arata said.

In another effort to fully man deployed units, Army leaders have changed the status of officers working for Multi-National

Force headquarters billets in Iraq and Afghanistan to a one-year, permanent change of station status, Arata said.

Until now, the Army used to deploy individual officers to these billets for a period of 179 days on a Temporary Change of Station, or TCS, basis.

The new policy will affect about 433 officers — 395 commissioned officers and 38 warrant officers, Arata said.

Army leaders decided to change the TCS to a PCS order because it provides more continuity for the headquarters staff, while at the same time, the officer's home unit can request a replacement for the slot opened by the PCS.

The Army does not allow such replacement if a soldier is on TCS orders. PCS orders also allows families of the assigned officers to move to a different location while the officer is deployed, if they so choose, Arata said.

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## Germany units prepare vehicles, equipment for Iraq

BY RICK EMERT

Stars and Stripes

BAMBERG, Germany — Moving vehicles and equipment for a battalion-size unit deploying to Iraq takes more than just lining them up onto railcars and tractor-trailers.

The 490th Base Support Battalion, 529th Ordnance Company and 94th Engineer Battalion spent six days working around-the-clock to get the more than 500 vehicles and pieces of equipment ready and loaded for transportation to Kuwait, according to S. Jose Estores, 490th BSB mobilization officer.

Before the Installation Staging Area operation even began at Rose Barracks, the 490th BSB Public Affairs Office had to coordinate with local authorities to warn nearby towns of impending vehicle convoys that could potentially cause traffic bottlenecks, Estores said.

When the vehicles from the 94th Engineer Battalion, which deploys to Iraq early next year, arrived at Vilseck, the vehicles had to be cleaned before they could begin the process of being inspected and loaded onto railcars and trucks.

"Cleanliness is a part of it," Estores said. "Often the vehicles have to be driven on the way to the ISA, and they are going to get dirty. If the captain of the ship [on which the vehicles will travel to Kuwait] says: 'I don't want that vehicle on my ship, it's dirty and could contaminate my other cargo,' then that's it. The captain of the ship has the final say."

That makes the 37 inspectors provided by the 529th Ordnance Company in Vilseck so important.

Although the inspectors had to check every vehicle being loaded, some prior coordination by the 529th Ordnance and a proactive approach from the 94th Engineers sped things along.



KATHY JORDAN/Courtesy of the U.S. Army

**Soldiers from the 94th Engineer Battalion prepare their vehicles Saturday to be loaded onto rail cars in Vilseck, Germany. More than 500 vehicles were inspected and loaded onto rail cars and long-haul tractor-trailers during the six-day operation that ended Monday.**

"For the most part, the 94th vehicles were in great condition," said Sgt. 1st Class Sean Tafuya, who led the team of inspectors from the 529th Ordnance Company. "Out of 350 vehicles processed, only a couple had to be held up more than two hours because they needed extra maintenance. Every vehicle made its rail time."

"We met with the 94th before the operation began to go over their documentation," Tafuya said. Documentation like the transportation control movement order, vehicle scanning document and dispatch must be in order to prevent delays at the port. "If those weren't ready, we

would have to spend about 45 minutes for each vehicle during it at the site."

The vehicles had to go through five stations of inspection before loading onto the railcars and tractor-trailers.

The loading of the equipment forced soldiers to work well into the night.

"There is a time line to meet that is dictated by the time that the train has to leave," Estores said. "We can't delay departure of the train."

Since the trains had to depart at 2 a.m. and noon each day, personnel at the railroad spent hours before those times to get the vehicles ready to load in a timely manner, Estores said.

While the six-day staging area and railroad operations had to fall into a routine to be efficient, Estores, as the mobilization officer, said the mission is special to him.

"A lot of people may think of this as a routine mission, but it's special to me," said Estores, who served with the 1st Infantry Division in Vietnam.

"When I do what I'm doing and know that it's benefiting the 1st ID, that's gratifying. I told these young soldiers who were out here loading their vehicles that they are performing an important mission. I'm honored and privileged to be here doing this for them."

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## Guard chief: Units need \$20 billion

BY JOHN J. LUMPKIN

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The National Guard needs \$20 billion in vehicles, radios and other equipment over the next three years to perform all the overseas and homeland security missions it is being assigned, the chief of the Guard said Thursday.

Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum told reporters at the Pentagon that the Army Guard is seeking \$7 billion in equipment in an emergency spending measure to pay for U.S. military operations overseas.

Blum insisted that troops going into Iraq are receiving equipment on par with their counterparts. It was a member of the Tennessee National Guard who last week challenged Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld about arming vehicles in the unit.

Still, equipment issues are only one of several problems facing the Guard. The demands created by the war on terrorism and the occupation of Iraq have led to 18-month deployments, including a year in the war zone, for many Army Guard units.

As of Sept. 30, 2004, more than 90,000 members of the Army Guard had been deployed to the front lines on the war on terrorism.

Blum said the Army Guard is short some 10,000 troops, as thousands fewer people leaving the active-duty military are signing up for Guard duty.

"We're in a more difficult recruiting environment," Blum said.

The sales pitch for the Guard has also changed.

"We are correcting some of our recruiting themes and slogans to reflect the reality of today," Blum said. "We're not talking about one weekend a month and two weeks a year and college tuition. We're talking about service to the nation."



# Saddam has session with a lawyer

BY SLOBODAN LEKIC  
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Former dictator Saddam Hussein met with a lawyer Thursday for the first time since his capture a year ago, officials said. Insurgents, meanwhile, killed a government official in Baghdad.

Saddam's meeting in his cell with a member of his legal team came as the Iraqi government is gearing up to begin the trials of some of Saddam's top deputies next week ahead of the country's elections in January.

Saddam and the lawyer, an Iraqi, met for four hours at the undisclosed location where the ousted leader is being detained, said Ziad al-Khasasneh, head of the legal team hired by Saddam's wife.

"He was in good health and his morale was high and very strong," al-Khasasneh said, speaking in Jordan. "He looked much better than his earlier public appearance when he was arraigned a few months ago."

Al-Khasasneh would not identify the lawyer.

Interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi announced on Tuesday that war crimes trials against Iraq's former Baath Party leaders will begin next week. Saddam would not be among those to appear in court, officials said.

Meanwhile, militants continued their campaign to derail the



U.S. Marines in the back of a Humvee on Thursday join a patrol searching a partially occupied residential neighborhood in Ramadi, Iraq. Iraqi militants in Ramadi say they shot and killed an Italian citizen.

vote by mounting a series of attacks in Baghdad and elsewhere.

Unidentified gunmen shot and killed Qassim Mahawi, deputy head of the Communications Ministry, as he was heading to work, police said. Eight of Mahawi's bodyguards were injured and hospitalized.

In western Baghdad, a roadside bomb exploded near a passing

SUV, badly damaging the vehicle, police said. After the blast, gunmen opened up on the survivors with automatic fire, killing a foreigner and wounding two others, Ali-Khadra police commissioner Ali Hussein Al-Hamadani said.

There was no immediate information on their nationalities.

In Ramadi, Iraqi militants told journalists they shot dead an Ital-

ian citizen after he tried to break through a highway guerrilla roadblock, purportedly killing one gunman in the process.

An Italian passport and Lebanese residency permit the gunman displayed identified the man as Salvatore Santoro. A document from the Italian Embassy in Beirut seeking an Iraqi visa for the man called him an aid worker helping Iraqi children.

## U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Wednesday, at least 1,303 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,019 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said.

The figures include three military civilians.

The AP count is five higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. Wednesday.

The British military has reported 74 deaths. Italy has reported 19; Poland, 13; Spain, 11; Ukraine, nine; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each. Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary and Latvia have reported one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,165 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 910 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ A Marine was killed Tuesday in Anbar province.

■ A soldier died Tuesday from gunshot wounds sustained during a combat mission south of Baghdad.

The latest identifications reported by the military:

■ Marine Col. Michael D. Anderson, 21, Modesto, Calif., killed Tuesday in Anbar province, Iraq; assigned to 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif.

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Joshua W. Dickinson, 25, of New Port Richey, Fla., killed Sunday in Anbar province, Iraq; assigned to 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif.

■ Army Sgt. Tina S. Sime, 22, Tucson, Ariz., died Monday in a vehicle accident near Cedar, Iraq; assigned to the Army Reserve's 208th Transportation Company, Tucson, Ariz.



## Iraqi police recruits end Jordan training

The Associated Press

MUWAQQAR, Jordan — A batch of 1,431 Iraqi police recruits ended six weeks of training in Jordan on Thursday, part of a U.S.-funded effort to rebuild security forces in the violence-ravaged country.

The graduates, wearing navy blue uniforms and baseball caps, stood in attention as a Jordanian police band played the Iraqi national anthem at a ceremony at the Jordan International Police Training Center in Muwaqqar, 22 miles east of Amman.

Thursday's graduates were the 11th batch, and the largest, since training began in November 2003.

Iraqi police have become frequent targets of insurgents fighting the U.S.-led multinational force in Iraq and the American-backed government in Baghdad. Hundreds have been killed in attacks on police stations, recruitment centers and convoys in an attempt to scare Iraqis away from joining the new police force and undermine the new government's efforts to restore security.

Under the agreement, nearly 32,000 Iraqi police recruits will be trained in Jordan over two years. So far, more than 8,000 Iraqi police have ended their training and returned home.

## Alleged bin Laden tape praises attack on U.S. Consulate

BY MAGGIE MICHAEL  
The Associated Press

CAIRO, Egypt — A man identified as Osama bin Laden, speaking on an audio tape posted on an Islamic Web site Thursday, praised an attack earlier this month on a U.S. consulate in Saudi Arabia and criticized the Saudi regime as weak and controlled by the United States.

The voice sounded like the al-Qaida terrorist chief's, and the tape, which was more than an hour, was posted on a site known as a clearinghouse for militant Islamic

comment. The identity of the voice, however, could not be independently confirmed.

The tape appeared the same day another dissident had called for anti-monarchy protests in the kingdom.

In Washington, Secretary of State Colin Powell said U.S. intelligence officials were analyzing the purported bin Laden tape, but "it appears to be" the voice of the al-Qaida leader.

The tape's reference to the Dec. 6 attack — in which five militants shot their way into the compound of the U.S. Consulate in

Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, killing five non-American employees — showed that it was made recently. Four of the attackers were killed and one was wounded in the consulate attack.

"God bless our brothers who stormed the American Consulate in Jiddah," the speaker said. "Those who were killed of our brothers, we ask God to accept them as martyrs." The attack was claimed at the time by al-Qaida's branch in the kingdom.

Also Thursday on the same Web site, an audiotape surfaced that was purportedly a

recording of the sounds of the consulate attack transmitted via the attackers' mobile phones. Sirens, machine gun fire and shots of "God is Great!" can be heard. At the end, a man recites Quranic verses and then says: "Humiliation for America the infidel and its allies!"

The speaker in the purported bin Laden tape, speaking in calm and even tones, accused Saudi rulers of "violating God's rules," a common theme of bin Laden, who accuses Saudi rulers of being insufficiently Islamic and too close to the "infidel" United States.

# U.S. warns of possible attacks in Kuwait

## Intelligence indicates terrorists groups are developing plans against unspecified targets

The Associated Press

KUWAIT CITY — The U.S. Embassy on Wednesday warned Americans living in Kuwait of possible terrorist attacks against them and asked them to exercise caution and report any suspicious activity to the police or the embassy.

In a message e-mailed to American citizens, the embassy said "it has credible information that terrorist groups are developing near-term plans for attacks against un-

specified targets in Kuwait."

The embassy asked the 13,000 Americans registered with it to "exercise caution, maintain a low profile and avoid areas where Westerners are known to congregate."

It also told them to immediately report any suspicious activity to the Kuwaiti police or the embassy.

Kuwait has been a major ally of Washington since a U.S.-led coalition fought the 1991 Persian Gulf War that liberated it

from a seven-month Iraqi occupation.

The small oil-rich state that depends on the United States for protection was the launch pad for the war that toppled Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein about two years ago.

However, some fundamentalist militants have attacked American military personnel in recent years, killing one Marine and an American civilian contracted to the military.

Prior to the U.S. military personnel statis-

tics for Kuwait being folded into Operation Iraqi Freedom data, Kuwait was host to just under 3,100 servicemembers.

The Army component of U.S. Central Command, U.S. Army Forces Central Command, maintains a forward presence in the region.

The embassy message makes no reference to U.S. military personnel there.

Stripes editor Pat Dickson contributed to this report from Washington.

# Rumsfeld to personally sign all condolence letters

BY LEO SHANE III  
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld will begin personally signing condolence letters sent to families of troops killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, after receiving criticism over his use of mechanical signatures.

In a statement provided to Stars and Stripes on Thursday, Rumsfeld tacitly admitted that in the past he has not personally signed the letters, but said he was responsible for writing and approving each of the 1,000-plus messages sent to the fallen soldiers' families.

"I have directed that in the future I sign each letter," he said in the statement.

"I am deeply grateful for the many letters I have received from the families of those who have been killed in the service of our country, and I recognize and honor their personal loss."

In a separate statement, Pentagon spokesman Larry Di Rita said, "In the interest of ensuring timely contact with grieving family members, he has not individually signed each letter."

Department of Defense officials for the past few weeks had said only that the content of the letters was private.

But several families of troops killed overseas said they were sure the notes they received had not been signed by hand, and said they were angry that Rumsfeld was not paying attention to their loss.

"It's to me, not only as someone who lost a loved one but also as someone who served in Iraq," Army Spc. Ivan Medina told Stripes.

"This doesn't show our families the respect they deserve," said Medina, a New York resident whose twin brother, Irving, was killed in a roadside bombing in Iraq this summer.

Illinois resident Betty Sullivan, whose son John was killed in November 2003 while working as an Army mechanic in Iraq, was incensed when she, her son's wife and her grandchildren received the exact same condolence letter with the apparently stamped signature.

"If each family receives two copies, how many signatures does that amount to?" she asked in an

e-mail response to Stripes. "I can understand the use of stamped signatures for his brothers' mementos, but for those of his wife and children and mother? No, no, no."

Retired Army Col. David Hackworth, an author and frequent critic of the Department of Defense, publicly criticized Rumsfeld in a syndicated column earlier this month for not reviewing each KIA letter personally.

He called the fake signatures "like having it signed by a monkey."

"Using those machines is pretty common, but it shouldn't be in cases of those who have died in action," he said. "How can [DOD officials] feel the emotional impact of that loss if they're not even looking at the letters?"

Hackworth said he objected to using the stamped signatures for promotion and commendation letters as well, but said not personally handling the condolence letters is a much more serious offense.

Family members had expressed similar concerns to Stripes about President Bush's signature on his condolence letters, but Allen Abney, spokesman for the president, said that Bush does personally sign the letters sent from the White House.

E-mail: Leo Shane at: shane@stripes.osd.mil



Rumsfeld

## Secretary of defense issues statement

Statement by Secretary Rumsfeld on condolences to service-members and their loved ones as provided to Stars and Stripes:

"It is a solemn privilege of the many of us in the Department to meet with U.S. forces and families who have experienced injury or death in the defense of our country."

"During visits with wounded forces and their families at Walter Reed Army Hospital or at the Bethesda Naval Medical Center, I have drawn inspiration from the dignity and resolve of these wonderful young Americans and their loved ones."

"Over the past years, my wife, Joyce, and I have met with several hundred wounded troops and their families during visits to intensive care units, therapy facilities, and their rooms in military hospitals in the United States and abroad."

"During visits to military installations, I have met with still

others during their visits to the Pentagon."

"Joyce and I also have met together and individually with spouses and children of those killed in action."

"At the earliest moment in the global war on terror, I determined that it is important that military families who have lost loved ones in hostile actions receive a letter from me directly."

"I wrote and approved the now more than 1000 letters sent to family members and next of kin of each of the servicemen and women killed in military action. While I have not individually signed each one, in the interest of ensuring expeditious contact with grieving family members, I have directed that in the future I sign each letter."

"I am deeply grateful for the many letters I have received from the families of those who have been killed in the service of our country, and I recognize and honor their personal loss."

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# In Iraq, video war is break from real fight

## Young troops often relax by taking on one another in Xbox, Playstation2

BY JOSH WHITE

The Washington Post

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq — "Die, die, die!" shouted Pfc. Joe Girardin, rising suddenly to his feet, grimacing. He launched a grenade, triumphantly throwing it into the air. "Boom!"

This was the war scene in a small trailer at this U.S. military camp near Baghdad in the wee hours of the morning last week, amid empty Pringles tubes, Pepsi cans, cigarette boxes and the swirling tunes of Jimi Hendrix and Metallica. The 29-inch color screen burst with machine-gun fire and rocket blasts, but the only real victims were pride and lost time.

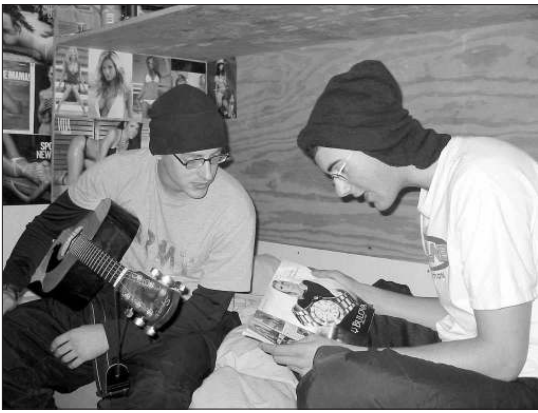
Outside the trailer, in the chilly desert darkness, the real war continued. Soldiers prepared for missions and patrols in armored Humvees, shouldered their M-16s and braced for the possibility of a car bomb or an enemy assault. Mortar rounds and explosions sent hollow thuds echoing for miles.

The trailer was an escape for the young soldiers. Girardin, 19, of Long Island, N.Y., was glued to his Army-issued television and the video game images pulsing across it. He was stalking Spc. Criss Sanders, 21, of Miami, who seemed always to get the better of him — and all other challengers this night. Sanders grabbed a sniper rifle and hid. Within moments, Girardin's character was lying in a pool of blood, Sanders' foil standing over him, continuing to pump bullets into the dead body. Girardin punched his bed furiously as a wide smile spread across Sanders' face.

"Don't take it so hard," Sanders said softly from beneath his low-slung floppy camo hat, already concentrating on his next assault.

"I'll show you how to use the sniper rifle."

Like the teenagers and college students across America who sit on couches late on weekend nights and into the next morning, these



THE WASHINGTON POST/JATOP

**Spc. Brian Schroeder, left, takes a break from music to look at a magazine with Pfc. Joe Girardin. Pinups, but no pornography, decorate the trailer's walls. Between guard duty and patrols, soldiers in Iraq gather to crash fast cars, play volleyball with buxom women and wage virtual warfare on Xbox or Playstation2.**

soldiers spend their free hours on the outskirts of the Iraqi capital killing one another in Xbox and Playstation2 games such as Halo and Mortal Kombat. Between guard duty and patrols and shifts at the dining facility, they gather to crash fast cars, play volleyball with buxom women and mimic warfare.

It's a virtual reality that at least temporarily hides the real war outside.

"I don't like to leave the room, if possible," Girardin said, only partially in jest. He spends his days in a large tent as an administrator with the headquarters company of the 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division. "You forget where you are when you're in this room. Then you step outside and the reality

hits you. You're in the desert. You're in Iraq. I try not to leave."

The smells of incense and cheap cigarettes floated into the darkness as the only door to the trailer section swung open. Inside, it's not unlike many college dorm rooms or fraternity house bedrooms.

The walls are papered with images of scantily clad women, a collection of magazine pinups that include dozens of celebrities and supermodels from the pages of FHM and Maxim. Because pornography is banned on these deployments, it's all PG-13.

Two beds, two stand-alone closets, two folding camp chairs and a makeshift coffee table are about all the room can handle, but four or more people regularly cram inside to complete the gaming rituals.

A tiny Christmas tree adorned with golden ornaments is dwarfed by the television set, which rests atop a white mini-fridge.

Unprecedented communications abilities make it possible for this room to feel very much as if it were in the United States. There's a computer waiting to get hooked to the Internet. Satellite television beams into many of the soldiers' quarters. Amazon.com offers two-week delivery for any video game or DVD movie a soldier desires, and anyone can buy an Iraq cell phone to call home. Local vendors also sell knockoff DVDs for \$5 apiece and video games for \$15, encouraging vast video libraries and trading among soldiers.

On this base near Baghdad International Airport, there's a post ex-

change that carries numerous movies, games and game systems; the mess hall is a cacophony of films, sports and news shown on enormous flat-screen televisions during meals. The recreation center includes a movie room, a pool table, a Ping-Pong table and a lounge with leather couches.

Internet cafes and workstations offer the soldiers contact with home, and some get the chance to speak with their families via video-teleconferencing sessions set up by the military.

"It's a reality of the modern world, and our Army is a reflection of our society," said Col. Mark A. Milley, who commands the brigade and stays in daily contact with his family via the Internet. Milley doesn't play video games, preferring physical training and reading, but says he understands that young soldiers are simply doing what they would do at home to relax. "It reduces stress and it gives them a break from the day-to-day grind."

Individual barracks rooms are in trailers that cover the base in long, straight lines, their porch lights a guide to night-flying helicopters. Exhausted soldiers are in pairs and do what they can to make their quarters feel like home.

Pfc. David Ursy, 25, of Tampa, is Girardin's roommate, a stocky cook with a nearly shaved head and the oldest member of this social club. Sitting on his bed, just a few hours before having to go back out duty, Ursy smiles after watching a foe in the game Mortal Kombat get murdered.

"I play every chance I get," he says, the clock passing 1:30 a.m.

"I should be asleep now. Oh well."

Sitting next to him is Spc. Robert McKinney, 23, of Brooklyn, N.Y., whose eyes go wide when he shoots at an enemy in Halo. "Don't be, don't be," McKinney chimes in. "Everyone gets to die."

"We sort of zone out and know we can be here and kill each other, and no one gets hurt," McKinney says later. "Everyone comes out alive."

# U.S. officials pleased with Iraq rebuilding effort

BY LEO SHANE III

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Despite a virtual standstill of reconstruction efforts in the areas of Iraq hardest hit by insurgents, U.S. officials on Wednesday said they were pleased with the overall rebuilding effort in the country.

Charles Hess, director of the U.S. Project and Contracting Office, told reporters that about \$14 billion of the \$184 billion assigned by Congress for reconstruction has been earmarked for specific projects, and work has begun on 70 percent of those. "We're now starting to see the results of some of our efforts," he said.

"Even though the situation is difficult, even though the security environment is not what we'd like it to be, progress is being made on the construction side," he said. "We're now starting to see the results of some of our efforts."

Reconstruction teams passed the 1,000-project mark in late November, and are on pace to hit 1,200 by the end of the year.

But so far little work has begun in the Sunni Triangle, and U.S. officials have not spent any of the \$80 million they have set aside for construction projects in Fallujah, Hess said.

"We're working with commanders to go into cities that have been removed from in-

surgent hands, specifically at the time and place they say it's safe to go in there," he said. "We intend to continue on still executing the programs that we have, unless the facilities we were going to restore don't happen to be there any more."

Hess also expects a sharp increase in completed construction over the next four months. Contractors typically don't receive the bulk of their payments until projects are finished, and only about \$2 billion of the reconstruction funds have been paid out.

Hess estimated that more than 103,000 Iraqis are employed in the construction.

Those numbers dropped significantly at the start of Ramadan, based on fears of ter-

rorist attacks during the holy month, though have fluctuated based on violence throughout the country. Hess said less than 5 percent of construction sites have been attacked, and officials do not anticipate a drop-off in workers leading up to the Iraq elections.

"Intimidation is a widespread problem: Iraqi supervisors have been threatened, workers have been threatened, and in some cases family members have been killed," Hess said.

"The encouraging note there is that even though this is happening, the employees and employees are still willing to come to work, and they still value what reconstruction is doing for them and their country."

E-mail Leo Shane at: shanel@stripes.osd.mil



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## IN THE STATES

Secretary of State Colin Powell, right, speaks to the media with U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan after the two met Thursday in Washington.

AP



## Powell: Vote help 'on track'

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Colin Powell gave understated praise Thursday for preparations the United Nations is making to support elections in Iraq, and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said the world body will beef up its support if need be.

"The U.N. effort seems to be on track in support of the Iraqi effort" to hold nationwide elections on Jan. 30, Powell said after a State Department meeting with Annan.

Iraqis themselves "have the principal responsibility," Powell said.

Powell noted that the United Nations is taking the first steps to expand its presence in Iraq outside

Baghdad to the cities of Basra and Irbil and has increased the number of election experts it will deploy in Iraq.

The United States has been pressing Annan to do more, and is unlikely to be satisfied with the current commitment of 25 election monitors.

"We have enough people in there to do the work," Annan said. "And if need be, we'll put in the staff we need to get the work done."

The meeting with Powell was probably Annan's last before Powell leaves the job next year. National security adviser Condoleezza Rice will replace Powell, and Annan was to meet with her at the White House later Thursday.

## Bush lays out his strategy for Social Security reform

BY LEIGH STROPE

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush said Thursday that "now is the time to confront Social Security" to deal with a projected \$3.7 trillion, 75-year shortfall and give younger workers the ability to invest some of their contributions into personal accounts.

Bush also promised to send Congress "a tough budget" early next year to hold the line on federal spending. "If the deficit is an issue, which it is, it's going to require some tough choices on the spending side," the president told a White House economic conference.

The president credited his tax-cutting policies with reviving the economy. Bush said his strategy will be "to grow the economy with reasonable tax policy but to make sure the deficit is dealt with by being wise about how we spend money."

"It's not going to be easy," Bush said. "It turns out [congressional] appropriators take their title seriously."

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said Wall Street's support for partial privatization was a conflict of interest, calling it "a risky scheme for America, but a sure bet for the financial services industry." Sweeney urged the Securities Industry Association to disavow Bush's planned overhaul.

Bush was not specific about his own ideas for solving the problem, but laid out a few do-or-die principles.

He said that for an undefined group of seniors "nothing will change" in their benefit structure, that there should be no increase in payroll taxes and that younger workers should be moved toward private accounts for some portion of their Social Security contributions.

The audience chuckled as Bush wrapped up his list of requirements by adding, "With those principles in mind, I'm open-minded with the members of Congress."

Democrats say supporters of personal accounts are exaggerating Social Security's funding problem.

## N.J. airport screeners lose fake bomb

NEWARK, N.J. — Baggage screeners at Newark Liberty International Airport spotted — and then lost — a fake bomb planted in luggage by a supervisor during a training exercise.

Despite an hours-long search Tuesday night, the bag, containing a fake bomb complete with wires, a detonator and a clock, made it onto an Amster-

dam-bound flight. It was recovered by Dutch airport security officials when the flight landed.

"This really underscores the importance of the TSA's ongoing training exercises," said Ann Davis, a spokeswoman for the Transportation Security Administration, the agency responsible for screening passengers and baggage for weapons and explosives. "At no time did the bag pose a threat."

From The Associated Press

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# Chase bashes Bush in expletive-laced rant

BY RICHARD LEIBY

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Even certified Hollywood liberals were reeling after Chevy Chase's potty-mouthed Bush-bashing Tuesday night at the Kennedy Center, where the actor hosted an awards ceremony staged by People for the American Way. For most of the evening, Chase was his usual comedic self, delivering lines such as "This just in: resignations in the upper echelon of the Bush administration. The Bush sisters have resigned and are being replaced by Paris and Nicky Hilton. Back for more news later."

After actors Alec Baldwin and Susan Sarandon delivered speeches accepting their Defender of Democracy awards, Chase took the stage a final time and unleashed a rant against President Bush that stunned the crowd. He deployed the four-letter word that got Vice President Dick Cheney in hot water, using it as a noun. Chase called the prez a "dumb [expletive]." He also used it as an adjective, assuring the audience, "I'm no [expletive] clown either. ... This guy started a jihad."

Chase also said: "This guy in office is an uneducated, real lying schmuck ... and we still couldn't beat him with a bore like Kerry."

People for the American Way distanced itself Wednesday from the actor's rant. "Chevy Chase's improvised remarks caught everyone off guard, and were inappropriate and offensive," Ralph Neas, the liberal advocacy group's president, said in a statement. "It was not what I would have said, and certainly not the language People for the American Way would ever use in discussing any president of the United States."

Founder Norman Lear agreed: "I thought it was utterly untoward, obviously unexpected and unscripted and all that stuff. And, uh — it was Chevy Chase. He'll live with it, I won't."



Chase

## Ohio recount goes on

CINCINNATI — In a scene reminiscent of Florida circa 2000, two teams of Republican and Democratic election workers held punch-card ballots up to the light and whispered back and forth as they tried to divine the voters' intent from a few hanging chads.

Observers for the presidential campaigns of John Kerry, President Bush and Green Party candidate David Cobb kept watch from chairs a few feet away.

The scene is being repeated statewide this week in a recount in the state that put Bush over the top in the election last month.

Officially, Bush beat Kerry by 119,000 votes in Ohio, but two third-party candidates collected the required \$13,600 for a recount they claim will show serious irregularities. The Kerry campaign is supporting the recount, though it has acknowledged it will not change the outcome.

## Gore's mother dies

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Pauline Gore, whose son Al became vice president and nearly captured the presidency and whose husband had a long and distinguished career in Congress, died Wednesday. She was 92.

She had been weakened in recent years by strokes and a heart attack, and died in at her home in Carthage.

Trained as a lawyer, Pauline Gore was a familiar figure on the campaign trails of her husband, Albert Gore Sr., and her son, former Vice President Al Gore.

She played a central role in shaping her husband's campaign strategy. Gore Sr. was a liberal Democrat who served in the House from 1939 to 1953 and in the Senate from 1953 to 1970 and aspired to the presidency himself. He died in 1998.

## Arms ban up for vote

SAN FRANCISCO — City residents will vote next year on a proposed weapons ban that would deny handguns to everyone except law enforcement officers, members of the military and security guards.

If passed next November, residents would have 90 days to give up firearms they keep in their homes or businesses. The proposal was immediately dismissed as illegal by a gun owners group.

From The Associated Press



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# Benefits of birth control pills disputed

BY MARILYNN MARCHIONE

The Associated Press

MILWAUKEE, Wis. — A study concluding that birth control pills slightly lowered the risk of heart disease has now been called into question by U.S. federal officials who say it was flawed and wasn't properly reviewed before it was presented at a major medical meeting in October.

Doctors from Wayne State University in Detroit had presented two studies at a reproductive medicine meeting in Philadelphia claiming that oral contraceptives lowered heart risks and did not increase the

risk of breast cancer.

That got a lot of attention because the conclusions were opposite what previous studies had found. The new information also came from the largest women's health study ever done in the United States.

But on Wednesday, Dr. Barbara Alving of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, which funds and oversees the national study, said these particular analyses hadn't been properly reviewed, and that a new analysis by senior statisticians had determined that the heart findings were flawed.

Once age and other factors were consid-

ered, they "could not find a relationship" between pill use and heart disease, Alving said. The breast cancer findings also are suspect now, she said.

The research was from the Women's Health Initiative, best known for its landmark finding in 2002 that taking hormones after menopause raised the risk of certain cancers and heart problems.

But it is not the best kind of study for determining risks of oral contraceptives, Alving said.

That's because it relies on women's memories of what drugs they used in previous years rather than actual hospital or

medical records.

Previous studies that were more scientifically sound have found that pill-users have a small increased risk of blood clots, heart attacks and stroke, she said. The Detroit researchers reported a small benefit — pill users reportedly had 8 percent less risk of cardiovascular disease and 7 percent less risk of developing any form of cancer.

But those findings were based on information women gave about whether they'd ever had heart problems or cancer, and were not verified with medical records as other WHI findings have been, Alving said.



Construction crews work in the rain Friday, building the parade reviewing stand in front of the White House in preparation for the inauguration of President Bush in January.

## Inauguration to have military overtones

BY JOHANNA NEUMAN

Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — As he leaves the Capitol after taking the oath of office Jan. 20, President Bush is expected to exercise a familiar presidential prerogative — reviewing the troops.

Then the real embrace of the military begins. Bush, who campaigned for re-election as a wartime president, will have more than the usual presence of military flourishes at his second-term inaugural ceremonies. With 138,000 U.S. troops serving in Iraq and casualties reported nearly every day, the White House wanted to showcase the role of the armed services in the war against terrorism as well as in the nation's premier display of a peaceful transition of power.

Officials are tight-lipped about details, awaiting a

briefing this week from the Presidential Inaugural Committee. But the military theme will thread through the 10 days of inaugural events normally highlighted by pomp and circumstance, a time when the nation's capital turns into a lavish backdrop for the revelry of the winning party.

This year, on the night of the inauguration, there will be a Commander in Chief Ball, open to troops who have just returned from Afghanistan or Iraq or are about to be deployed to either place.

And there will be 2,100 military personnel playing in bands, appearing on floats or performing in the inaugural parade, with thousands more in ceremonial units, honor cords and even announcing the names of participants to spectators lining the route.

"The fact that we're a nation at war will be reflected throughout the inaugural," said Tracey Schmitt, a spokeswoman for the inaugural committee.

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## IN THE WORLD

## 10 convicted in Christmas market bomb plot

BY VERENA VON DERSCHAU  
The Associated Press

PARIS — Ten accused Islamic militants were convicted Thursday and sentenced to prison terms ranging from one to 10 years for their roles in a millennium plot to blow up a Christmas market in the eastern city of Strasbourg on New Year's Eve 2000.

The suspects — Algerian nation-

als and French citizens of Algerian origin who included an alleged associate of al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden — went on trial in October on charges they were involved in the foiled plot.

They were convicted of criminal association with a terrorist enterprise that state prosecutor Christophe Tessier alleged had links to Islamic networks in Britain, Italy and Spain.

Cooperation between French and German police led to the arrest in late 2000 of a Frankfurt-based group of Algerians who allegedly planned to attack the market. The bombing "was avoided by a hair," Tessier said last month.

Strasbourg's well-known market is set up around the city's cathedral during the Christmas period and becomes a major gather-

ing place.

France opened an investigation after four suspected Islamic radicals were arrested in Frankfurt, Germany, in possession of a map of Strasbourg and a video cassette showing the market.

The four were convicted in Germany in March 2003 and received prison terms ranging from 10 to 12 years. The German court said the group had planned to blow up

pressure cookers packed with explosives, a technique they allegedly learned in Afghan camps.

Those tried in Paris included Slimane Khalifaoui, 29; Yacine Akhouch, 30; Rabah Kadri, 37; and Mohamed Bensakria, 37 — considered one of bin Laden's lieutenants in Europe.

Khalifaoui and Bensakria received maximum 10-year sentences.

## Greek hijacking end



Albanian immigrants Leonard Murati, right, and Gaz Resuli, back left, are escorted by plainclothes police officers outside Greek police headquarters in Athens on Thursday. The two men who hijacked a bus for 18 hours and demanded \$ 1.33 million surrendered to authorities after releasing all hostages. The government appealed for calm on Thursday fearing a public backlash against immigrants living in Greece.

## Britain's high court deals blow to national anti-terror policy

House of Lords rules suspects cannot be held without trial

BY BETH GARDINER  
The Associated Press

LONDON — Britain's highest court dealt a huge blow to the government's anti-terrorism policy Thursday by ruling that it cannot detain foreign suspects indefinitely without trial.

Judges in the House of Lords ruled 8-1 in favor of a group of foreign men jailed without charge for up to three years. Their lawyers say their detention is a gross violation of human rights.

The British government had argued that the detention without trial of some terrorist suspects was a tough but necessary measure to protect a free society from the threat of devastating attacks.

While the judges cannot directly strike down the law, their ruling that it is incompatible with the European Convention on

Human Rights puts the onus on the government to resolve that conflict by repealing or amending the disputed provision.

Home Secretary Charles Clarke said the detainees would remain imprisoned and the law would stay in force while legislators considered what to do next.

The nine law lords — members of the House of Lords who constitute Britain's highest court of appeal — voted against the measures brought in after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, under which foreign terrorist suspects may be detained indefinitely without charge or trial if they cannot safely be removed to another country.

Seventeen people have been detained under the disputed provision of the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act. Eleven remain in custody and six have been freed, deported or detained under other powers.

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# Yushchenko points finger at government

## Opposition leader believes poisoning occurred at dinner with Ukrainian official

BY YURAS KARMANAU  
The Associated Press

KIEV, Ukraine — Opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko said Thursday that he was sure he was poisoned by the Ukrainian government and believes it most likely happened at a dinner he had with the country's top security service officials.

Yushchenko's comments, made in an interview, were the first time he pinpointed when and where he believed he was poisoned with dioxin. He said it likely happened at a Sept. 5 dinner with the head of the Ukrainian security service, Ihor

Smeshko, and his deputy, Volodymyr Satsuk.

"That was the only place where no one from my team was present and no precautions were taken concerning the food," he said. "It was a project of political murder, prepared by the authorities."

A parliamentary commission that investigated Yushchenko's mysterious illness in October said he had complained of pains — including a headache about three hours after the meal and an acute stomach ache the next day.

Yushchenko, who was disfigured by poi-

soning, said that Ukrainian prosecutors were looking into the case and said he was confident the official culprits would be punished.

Members of Yushchenko's campaign team had spoken of the security dinner as a possible site of the poisoning, but Yushchenko himself had until now refrained from pointing the finger at specific officials.

Experts say it is impossible for Yushchenko to have naturally acquired such high levels of dioxin. New tests reveal the level in his blood is more than 6,000 times higher than normal and is the second high-

est ever recorded in human history, said Abraham Braverman, professor of environmental toxicology at the Free University in Amsterdam, where blood samples taken in Vienna were sent for analysis.

Braverman's team has narrowed the search from more than 400 dioxins to about 29 and is confident they will identify the poison by week's end.

Poisoning experts say those who spiked Yushchenko's food may have tried to kill him or may simply have tried to debilitate him during the election campaign.

What constitutes a lethal dose of dioxin has never been established, because nobody has ever been known to die from it.

# Afghan police seize 15 tons of opium

BY PAUL ALEXANDER  
The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — A special anti-narcotics task force has raided drug laboratories in eastern Afghanistan, seizing more than 15 tons of opium as part of President Hamid Karzai's crackdown on what he calls the country's biggest threat, officials said Thursday.

That amount of opium, one of the largest confiscations in recent years, could have been refined into about 1½ tons of heroin. U.N. surveys estimate Afghanistan accounted for three-quarters of the world's opium last year.

The raids took place Wednesday in Nangarhar province's Achin district, an Interior Ministry statement said, adding that Afghan Spe-

cial Narcotics Force agents also destroyed 24 opium presses that are used to refine the drug. They also seized three tons of chemicals used to process opium into heroin and five AK-47 assault rifles.

But no arrests were made as the labs' operators apparently fled just before the operation began.

"This is a legitimate action ... to destroy the drug economy in Afghanistan," Interior Minister Ali Jalali said. "This operation is a proven example for other growers or traffickers that from now on, the government of Afghanistan is committed to destroying the drug economy."

Another bust last week yielded nearly two tons of opium.

Karzai said in his Dec. 6 inaugural address that the country's

booming drug economy — estimated to account for 60 percent of gross domestic product — will be the top priority in his fresh five-year term. He said it is linked to terrorism and called it a bigger threat than the Taliban and al-Qaida insurgents who mount all daily attacks in the country-side.

The United Nations has warned that the exploding narcotics industry is turning the impoverished country into a "narco-state."

"Without substantial progress in addressing the sources of insecurity, reconstruction efforts and the establishment of viable state institutions will continue to falter, and the economy may well be subsumed by the illicit drugs industry," U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said earlier this month.



Indonesian police officers take guard Wednesday during security checks at the entrance of the Jakarta Hilton Hotel in Indonesia. Five foreign governments issued warnings, saying terrorists are ready to carry out attacks against Western targets.

# Hotels in Indonesia boost security amid terror fears

BY CHRIS BRUMMITT  
The Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Hilton hotels in Indonesia tightened security Thursday at their three properties after authorities ordered a nationwide security crackdown following warnings from foreign governments that terrorists were preparing to launch attacks against Western targets.

Australia's warning was unusually specific, saying it had "credible information" that terrorists could be targeting the Hilton Hotel chain in the country. The United States, Britain, New Zealand and Japan also issued warnings but did not mention specific targets.

At the Hilton in Jakarta, police armed with automatic weapons stood guard next to Christmas trees hung with tinsel, searching bags and checking cars. Hotel officials said they had not seen a mass exodus of guests, but that some groups had canceled functions.

Suspected al-Qaida-linked militants have launched three bloody bombings on Western targets in

the world's most populous Muslim nation in the past three years.

Despite scores of arrests, local police and foreign governments have repeatedly warned more attacks were likely. Several countries warn their citizens not to travel to the country at all.

"We are doing our utmost to increase our vigilance," said Jakarta police spokesman Ciptono, who goes by a single name. "In light of the threat, the national police chief has ordered the Christmas and New Year's security operation, which was supposed to start Saturday, to begin immediately."

The U.S. Embassy reminds Americans that the terrorist threat in Indonesia continues and may increase over the holiday period, the U.S. Embassy said in an e-mail to expatriate Americans.

Jakarta has complained that advisories are unfair in light of the global nature of terrorism, and that the panic they cause gives the terrorists a victory.

Hilton International Indonesia's chief operating officer Nizar Sungkar said Thursday he was "surprised" by Canberra's warning, but said that security at all the chain's hotels had been tightened.

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## YOUR MONEY

# FCC OKs Internet access on commercial planes

## Research will determine future of cell phones on jets

BY GENARO C. ARMAS  
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Federal regulators voted Wednesday to give air passengers high-speed Internet connections while they fly.

The unanimous vote by the Federal Communications Commission means air travelers could be surfing the Web by 2006.

"If there is a theme for this meeting, it is that we want high-speed technologies on the land, in the air and on the sea," FCC Chairman Michael Powell said. "We are pushing the frontiers in order to bring the information age to all corners of the world."

The FCC also voted to solicit comments from the public about ending the ban on in-flight use of cell phones. Among the issues to consider are whether passengers want to be surrounded by phone conversations.

"The ability to communicate is a vital one, but good cell phone etiquette is also essential," Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein said. "Our job is to see if this is possible and then let consumers work out the etiquette."

David Stemple, president of the Air Travelers Association, a passenger advocacy group, said allowing Internet access would make business travelers more efficient and while away the time for a lot of other passengers. This is all the wave of the future here."

Currently, the only way passengers on domestic flights can communicate with the ground is through phones usually built into the seat backs. That service isn't very popular. It costs far more than conventional cell phones — about \$3.99 a minute — and the reception often is poor.

Of the three companies that initially offered that ser-

vise on commercial jets, only Verizon Airfone remains. It has phones on about 1,500 jets.

The FCC approved a measure to restructure how frequencies for such "air-to-ground" services are used and allow the airlines to offer wireless high-speed Internet connections.

Left undecided was the issue of how many companies the FCC would allow, through an auction, to offer such services. Verizon Airfone maintains that letting one company handle the service would ensure the best quality. FCC officials said the auction would take place within a year.

Once plans are completed and planes outfitted with the equipment, high-speed Internet access might be found on commercial domestic flights by 2006, said Jack Blumenstein, chairman and CEO of Louisville, Colo.-based AirCell.

The time line on when air travelers would be able to start using cell phones in flight is murky, in part because both the FCC and the Federal Aviation Administration have the practice.

The FCC took up the issue Wednesday in an effort to start public discussion, and commissioners might eventually relax the ban on the ban entirely. Of most concern to FCC officials is how using a cell phone in an airplane would interfere with cell phone use on the ground.

The FAA concerns is over whether airborne electrical systems, agency spokeswoman Laura Brown said. The technology used on seat-back phones and being considered for use for wireless Internet hardware causes no such interference.

The FAA has commissioned a private, independent firm to study the issue. Results aren't due until 2006. The FAA will not make its decision on cell phone use until after the study is completed, Brown said.

# Failed brakes hat confidence in car

Dear Tom and Ray:  
You guys really make me laugh. So now you know that one other person is out there laughing with you! I have a 2003 Windstar with about 16K miles. Last Saturday, my wife took my car to watch the Mummies parade in North Wildwood, N.J. As she approached a stop sign, the brakes failed. The pedal went to the floor. She was not going very fast and was able to bring the car to a stop without hitting any

thing. She immediately turned the car off, and the brakes returned (the pedal returned to its normal position and the brakes worked). The brakes have been working normally ever since. I checked under the hood, saw no leaks, and the master-cylinder reservoir was full. The brake pads look good. We took it to a Ford dealership (they kept it for a day), and the mechanics said that the brakes were OK. I traded it in! Could it be a bad master cylinder or anti-lock brake system? How can I ever have confidence in the brakes again?

Gene  
Tom: You can't, Gene. At least not until somebody gives you a credible explanation for why they failed. No one has done that yet. RAY: There is no "credible" explanation for the hydraulics, so he was just trying to get rid of you with that one. TOM: I can think of a few possible explanations for what happened. The most likely is that your wife accidentally drove all the way to the Mummies parade with the parking brake applied — or, more likely, partially applied. That would mean that the brakes were being applied the whole time she was driving, even though her foot wasn't on the brake pedal. That overheated the brakes, which boiled the brake fluid, which led to the brake failure.

RAY: Then, when she shut off the engine and let things cool down, the brakes returned to normal. And we would assume that after that, she released the parking brakes, and re-arrange the car.

TOM: How do you prove that's what happened? I guess you have to put her under the klieg lights and interrogate her.

RAY: Actually, you might do better just asking her whether it's possible. You said it was your car she was driving, and this is something any person can easily do.

## Click and Clack

Tom and Ray Magliozzi

car vehicle. In fact, I recently drove halfway to Montreal with the parking brake partially applied in one of our brand-new test cars. I won't mention whose car it was, because I don't want Chrysler on our case again!

TOM: A related cause of intermittent brake failure is a faulty power-brake booster. That creates a situation similar to leaving the parking brake on. It fails to release the brakes entirely. So, it also causes brake failure by overheating the brake fluid. If that's the case, it could happen again.

RAY: If it's not either of those, then it's probably a bad master cylinder, which would need to be replaced.

Gene  
Tom: Unless your wife fees up to perhaps having seen the red "parking brake" light on when she was driving that day, failed. No one has done that yet. RAY: There is no "credible" explanation for the hydraulics, so he was just trying to get rid of you with that one.

TOM: I can think of a few possible explanations for what happened. The most likely is that your wife accidentally drove all the way to the Mummies parade with the parking brake applied — or, more likely, partially applied. That would mean that the brakes were being applied the whole time she was driving, even though her foot wasn't on the brake pedal. That overheated the brakes, which boiled the brake fluid, which led to the brake failure.

RAY: Ask him to keep it and drive it home for a few days. Tell him to take his family out in it and see if he can get the problem to recur. If you notice a sudden deer-in-the-headlights look when you make this suggestion, you'll know you've made your point. Good luck, Gene.

Got a question about cars? Write to Click and Clack in care of this newspaper, or e-mail them by visiting the Car Talk section of cars.com on the World Wide Web. Distributed by King Features Syndicate Inc.

## WEDNESDAY'S MARKET SUMMARY

INDEXES				
High	Low	High	Low	% YTD
Vol	Vol	Vol	Vol	52-wk
3,758.41	2,743.46	Dow Jones Industrial	10,991.41	+15.99
19,252.54	254.11	Dow Jones Transportation	3,758.41	+2.58
7,139.93	6,171.85	NASDAQ Composite	1,515.78	+35.84
1,417.45	1,118.28	NYSE Composite	1,415.78	+1.50
1,259.12	1,259.12	Nasdaq Composite	1,259.12	+2.71
63.83	546.29	S&P 500	1,259.12	+2.34
64.48	515.90	Russell 2000	64.48	+1.07
11,370.17	10,358.52	DJ Wilshire 5000	11,370.17	+17.88

AMEX				
Most Active (\$1 or more)	Most Active (\$1 or more)	Most Active (\$1 or more)	Most Active (\$1 or more)	Most Active (\$1 or more)
Volume	Vol	Vol	Vol	Vol
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88

KEY DEFENSE STOCKS				
High	Low	High	Low	% YTD
Vol	Vol	Vol	Vol	52-wk
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88

KEY MUTUAL FUNDS				
High	Low	High	Low	% YTD
Vol	Vol	Vol	Vol	52-wk
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88

KEY DEFENSE STOCKS				
High	Low	High	Low	% YTD
Vol	Vol	Vol	Vol	52-wk
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88

KEY DEFENSE STOCKS				
High	Low	High	Low	% YTD
Vol	Vol	Vol	Vol	52-wk
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88
1,750.33	1.00	SPDR	486.74	12.88

## EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Dollar costs	\$1,750.33
British pound	\$0.7270
Japanese yen (Dec. 18)	\$0.0070
South Korean won (Dec. 17)	\$0.0000
Commercial rates	
British pound	\$1,750.33
Canadian dollar	\$0.7270
Singapore dollar	\$0.0070
Euro (YTD)	\$0.7270
Hong Kong dollar	\$0.0070
Israeli sheqel	\$0.0070
Japanese yen	\$0.0070
Korean won	\$0.0000
Swiss franc	\$0.7270
Thai baht	\$0.0070
U.S. dollar	\$1,750.33

NASDAQ	
Volume	Vol
1,750.33	1.00
1,750.33	1.00
1,750.33	1.00
1,750.33	1.00
1,750.33	1.00

NASDAQ	
Volume	Vol
1,750.33	1.00
1,750.33	1.00
1,750.33	1.00
1,750.33	1.00
1,750.33	1.00

NASDAQ	
Volume	Vol
1,750.33	1.00
1,750.33	1.00
1,750.33	1.00
1,750.33	1.00
1,750.33	1.00

NASDAQ	
Volume	Vol
1,750.33	1.00
1,750.33	1.00
1,750.33	1.00
1,750.33	1.00
1,750.33	1.00

NASDAQ	
Volume	Vol
1,750.33	1.00
1,750.33	1.00
1,750.33	1.00
1,750.33	1.00
1,750.33	1.00

# Events and Sensibility

## Turning on the heat

BY NANCY DUNNAN

The cost of heating fuel is going up again this winter. It will be more than 25 percent, according to some experts.

Most utility companies publish energy savings suggestions — check with yours by calling the consumer hot line. Others offer cash to customers who in-

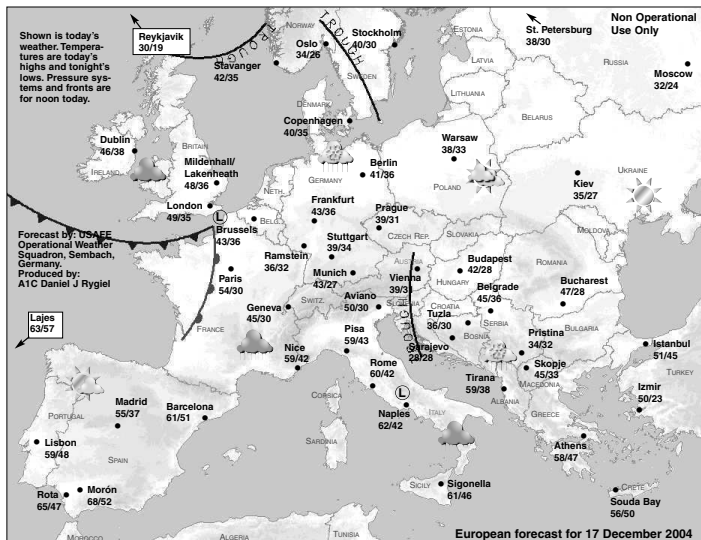
still electricity equipment and weather stripping.

For a list of programs, check out the Web site of The Edison Electric Institute, the electric utilities' trade group, at [www.eei.org/wisense](http://www.eei.org/wisense).

Financial adviser, economist and security analyst Nancy Dunnan is the author of "How to Invest \$50 to \$100,000" She writes a weekly column for theonlineinvestor.com.

Source: The Associated Press, Bank of America





KEY: Sunny Partly cloudy Mostly cloudy Cloudy Snow Sleet Rain Rainbow Snow

Cold front Warm front Trough Occluded front Stationary front Low High

## AFRICA

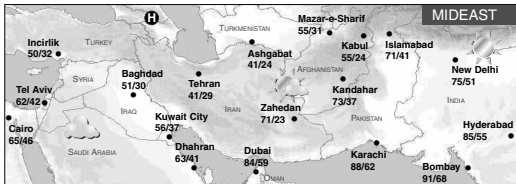
Cape Town	77	89	Mogadishu	89	76
Dakar	80	71	Nairobi	80	58
Freetown	89	74	Rabat	66	47
Antananarivo	86	72	Accra	68	50

## THE WORLD

Amsterdam	41	37	Manila	88	73
Batavia	68	43	Mexico City	87	43
Beijing	47	22	Montreal	33	MO3
Buenos Aires	60	48	Riyadh	67	40
Buenos Aires	66	63	Rio de Janeiro	89	73
Honolulu	89	72	Sofia	46	27
Hong Kong	76	63	Sydney	80	68
London	59	48	Tokyo	55	44

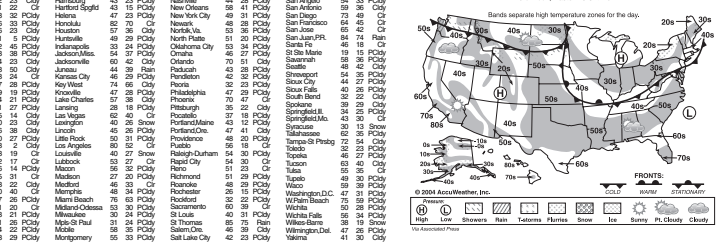
## TODAY'S STATE-TO-STATE OUTLOOK

Alaska	54	36	PC	Idaho	51	32	PC
Alaska	54	36	PC	Idaho	51	32	PC
Alaska	54	36	PC	Idaho	51	32	PC
Alaska	54	36	PC	Idaho	51	32	PC
Alaska	54	36	PC	Idaho	51	32	PC
Alaska	54	36	PC	Idaho	51	32	PC
Alaska	54	36	PC	Idaho	51	32	PC
Alaska	54	36	PC	Idaho	51	32	PC
Alaska	54	36	PC	Idaho	51	32	PC
Alaska	54	36	PC	Idaho	51	32	PC



## THE UNITED STATES TODAY

As of noon, Eastern U.S. time



## EUROPEAN FORECAST

**Benelux:** Mostly cloudy to cloudy skies with rain showers. Highs in the 40s, Saturday lows in the 30s.

**Britain, Ireland:** Cloudy skies with rain showers. Highs in the upper 40s, Saturday lows in the mid to upper 30s.

**Croatia and Bosnia:** Cloudy skies with morning freezing rain and fog with isolated light snow. Highs in the upper 20s to upper 30s, Saturday lows in the mid to low 30s.

**France:** Partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rain showers. Highs in the 50s, Saturday lows in the low 30s to low 40s.

**Northern Germany:** Cloudy skies with rain/snow showers. Highs in the low 40s, Saturday lows in the upper 30s.

**Southern Germany:** Cloudy skies with rain showers. Highs in the upper 30s to low 40s, Saturday lows in the upper 20s to low 30s.

**Hungary:** Partly cloudy skies. Highs in the low 40s, Saturday lows in the upper 20s.

**Northern Italy:** Partly to mostly cloudy skies with light fog. Highs in the low 50s, Saturday lows in the low 30s.

**Southern Italy:** Cloudy skies with rain showers. Highs in the low 50s, Saturday lows in the 40s.

**Kosovo:** Cloudy skies with morning fog and afternoon freezing rain. Highs in the low 30s, Saturday lows in the low 30s.

**Norway:** Cloudy skies with rain/snow showers. Highs in the low 30s to low 40s, Saturday lows in the upper 20s to mid 30s.

**Portugal, Spain:** Sunny to partly cloudy skies. Highs in the mid 50s to upper 60s, Saturday lows in the upper 30s to low 50s.

**Turkey:** Partly to mostly cloudy skies. Highs in the low 30s in the northern regions to low 50s in the southern regions. Saturday lows in the upper 20s on the western coast to mid 40s on the southeastern coast.

For current weather watches, warnings, and 5-day forecasts go to the USAF Operational Weather Squadron home page at <https://www.sembach.af.mil> or <https://www.public.sembach.af.mil>

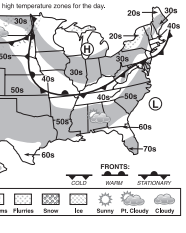
## SUN &amp; MOON

	Today	Tomorrow
Sunrise (Baghdad)	7:01 am	7:01 am
Sunrise (Frankfurt)	8:19 am	8:20 am
Sunset (Baghdad)	4:56 pm	4:56 pm
Sunset (Frankfurt)	4:24 pm	4:25 pm

New moon 10 Jan Full moon 25 Dec Last of 3 Jan

## THE UNITED STATES TODAY

As of noon, Eastern U.S. time



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Check our Relocation Guide every Saturday to find Realtors at your new station.

STARS AND STRIPES

Your HomeTown Newspaper

Scheduled to ETS or PCS?



## FACES

## Bracco follows 'Sopranos' pipeline

Lorraine Bracco will be the next star of "The Sopranos" to moonlight on a "Law & Order" drama.

Bracco, who plays mobster Tony Soprano's psychiatrist on the HBO show, has been cast as an ambitious lawyer on the upcoming "Law & Order: Trial by Jury" on NBC, a series spokeswoman said Tuesday.

Michael Imperioli, who plays a Soprano relative, is appearing in the final four episodes of "Law & Order" this season, while Robert Iler, who plays Tony Soprano's son, was on "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit" last year.

Edie Falco played a defense lawyer on "Law & Order" before starring in "The Sopranos."

"Law & Order: Trial by Jury," the fourth in the "Law & Order" franchise, stars Bebe Neuwirth and Jerry Orbach.

Bracco's episode will film in January; the series will debut in early 2005, but an air date has yet to be announced.

## Dude looks like a granddad

Steven Tyler is now, gasp, a grandfather.

Ly Tyler, daughter of the Aerosmith lead singer and model Bebe Buell, gave birth to a son in Manhattan on Tuesday, *Us Weekly* magazine reported.

"They are both doing great," Tyler's publicist, Stephen Huvane, told The Associated Press on Wednesday. He said the baby hadn't yet been named.

The 27-year-old actress is married to Royston Langdon of the band *Spacehog*. They tied the knot in March 2003.

Tyler played the elf princess Arwen in "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy. Her screen credits also include "Jersey Girl" and "Armageddon."

## Houston has an auto accident

Singer Whitney Houston rear-ended an Alphareta, Ga., city bus in with her sports car, but no one was hurt, police said.

The accident happened Wednesday afternoon as Houston was making a left turn, said Sgt. Chris Lagerblom.

The bus sustained minor damage. The bumper of Houston's Porsche was mangled but the singer was not injured.

She was given a citation for failure to yield, a misdemeanor.

Houston lives with her husband, R&B singer Bobby Brown, near the suburb of Alpharetta, about 25 miles north of Atlanta.

## Kournikova quite possibly married

Is the knot really tied this time?

Anna Kournikova and Enrique Iglesias were married in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, a few weeks ago, *Us Weekly* magazine reports.

"Everything is awesome. We are married," the magazine quotes Kournikova as saying at a charity tennis event in Florida on Sunday.

Ivy Moltenkamp, Kournikova's publicist, refused Tuesday to confirm or deny the *Us Weekly* story, saying, "We never comment on her personal life." Iglesias' representative, Stacy Boniello, also had no comment.

Court officials in charge of registering marriages in Puerto Vallarta and neighboring Nuevo Vallarta said they had no record of such a wedding. But the former tennis pro and the Latin pop star could have had a religious wedding, which would not be legally recognized in Mexico.

Kournikova, 23, is no stranger to wedding drama. There have been numerous reports in the past few months that she and Iglesias, 29, already were married. And she was briefly married to Russian hockey player Sergei Fedorov in 2001, though at the time she denied it.



Houston



Kournikova



Iglesias



Members of the music group Destiny's Child pose at the Rhythm Royal Hotel in New York last month. From left are Beyonce Knowles, Michelle Williams and Kelly Rowland.

## Destiny's calling

## Pop trio still together after taking time off for solo work

BY NEKESA MUMBI MOODY

The Associated Press

NEW YORK

Looking back at breakups of some of the great pop groups, the beginning of the end can often be traced to two words: "solo project."

So when Beyoncé — already the magnet of Destiny's Child — catapulted to superstardom last year with her triple-platinum, Grammy-winning solo debut, "Dangerously In Love," many predicted the demise of the best-selling girl group.

The trio is happy to prove the skeptics wrong. Though Beyoncé's solo hits are still lingering on the charts and radio, Destiny's Child — Beyoncé, Kelly Rowland and Michelle Williams — have reunited for "Destiny Fulfilled," their first album in three years. With their new hit single, the sexy dance track "Lose My Breath," the women are picking up where they left off: on top of the charts.

"It feels wonderful being back. I know one thing that we really love is just the camaraderie all over again," says Rowland, as she and her bandmates sprawl on oversized chairs in a hotel suite during a day of interviews and photo shoots. While the album is being billed as a reunion, the women say they never stopped working as a unit — even during Beyoncé's breakout year.

"People said that they broke up, but we appeared at the BET Awards together! Destiny's Child still had appearances together that we did, and people kept saying, 'They ain't together.' We're like, 'Jerk, you just saw us,'" says Williams, as the group dissolves in laughter.

"Well, if we broke up, we were still friends!"

Friendship aside, critics are still pondering why the group decided to regroup, given the diverging interests of each member.

Rowland has had moderate success with acting and her own solo debut, 2002's "Simply Deep"; Williams released two gospel albums and starred in Broadway's "Aida."

So why release another Destiny's Child album? "Well, why not?" retorts Beyoncé. "It's pleasant, but still perved at the suggestion, 'I mean, Destiny's Child has sold millions of records, had so much success, and it goes far beyond the success we had as a group. We're friends, and we made a

commitment to each other. We made a commitment to our fans. And we were all looking forward to it."

There's no denying Destiny's Child's success. Since their 1997 debut, they became one of the best-selling girl groups of all time, racking up numerous hits, including "Say My Name," "Independent Women (Part II)" and "Bootylicious." What's most clear now is their development into young women. On "Destiny Fulfilled," their earlier sexy-but-innocent tone has disappeared. The first single talks about a guy that can't keep up in bed, and other songs have a sexual, but not graphic, tone.

"It touches on a more sensual side of Destiny's Child because we never talked about that. Now that we're older, we're more comfortable with it," says Beyoncé.

"I think they're more mature now," says Rodney Jerkins, who produced "Lose My Breath" along with some of their earlier material. "They feel like they can talk about stuff that before they were too young to talk about. I think that's the place that they're at. It's not raunchy, but sexy."

Besides sex, there's also an emphasis this time around on group parity. Beyoncé is no longer the focal point visually — she's rarely photographed now in the middle, like the old days. And while Beyoncé's reputation as an emerging musical wunderkind continues — she was a writer-producer not only on her own album, but 2001's "Survivor" — she's brags that comrades are branching out musically as well.

"Now, they're so much more comfortable, and they're not afraid to hum the melody that it's in their head, or say the lyrics or whatever is coming in their head, which before they were way more shy about it," says Beyoncé, beaming like a mother hen. "They've just blossomed. It's almost like different people. It took us kind of being away from each other and having to really focus on ourselves individually to grow."

What is clear is the trio's strong friendship. Even if Beyoncé's star has shone brightest, starting in several movies and dating rap superstar Jay-Z, one would be hard-pressed to detect any jealousy or dissension. Even Jerkins was struck by their closeness.

"I've worked with so many different artists," he says, "and [it just shows] — their togetherness, their friendliness. As much as Beyoncé is a superstar, it's still a group."

## Goats returned

**VT** CORINTH — A man who tried to care for more than 300 goats and had some of the animals living in his house with him has had animals that were seized from him returned and won permission to move them out of state.

Chris Weathersbee, 64, pleaded guilty to animal cruelty and two other charges as part of a plea bargain that called for the return of the seized goats and the removal of his herd to eastern Kentucky.

Weathersbee said he has hired a livestock trucking company and plans to leave soon for a Kentucky farm, where he expects the animals to be used on a vegetation-management project.

## Homeless celebration

**TX** SAN ANTONIO — Central Texas' homeless and needy are not forgotten for the holidays, with thousands treated to food and gifts under an Interstate 35 bridge.

The event, for the second time in its 10-year history, included a brief tribute to homeless people in San Antonio who died during the year.

Organized by the San Antonio Area Homeless Action Coalition and the city's Community Initiative Department, the "Christmas Under the Bridge" attracted an estimated 2,000 people, including about 200 volunteers, said Maria Ramirez, a program manager with the city's community action division.

## Treadmill world record

**VA** ARLINGTON — Michael Wardian knew he was going places, even if only on the treadmill.

The local runner beat a rather unusual world record by more than 10 minutes, running a 26.2-mile marathon on the exercise machine.

It's hard enough to run that distance out in the open, but Wardian — who qualified for the Olympic trials this year — set a time of 2:23:58. The previous record was 2:31:04, according to "The Book of Alternative Records."

## Naughty business

**CA** WEST COVINA — Always wanted to leave a lump of coal in some Scrooge's Christmas stocking? Then Alec Nystrom has a deal for you.

The 11-year-old boy is selling lumps of coal for 50 cents each in front of his West Covina home. So far, he says, he's raked in about \$100.

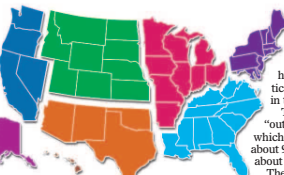
Alec got the idea after his father, Roy, told him how his parents always warned him he'd receive a lump in his Christmas stocking if he wasn't good.

Alec's father is an artist who often uses coal in his work, so the boy had a ready supply to sell.

Alec said he hopes to sell enough lumps of coal this holiday season to buy a dirt bike.

## Tree thief

**MO** ST. LOUIS — Organizers of a Christmas tree sale supporting youth hockey programs figured that a tree or two might get swiped from their outdoor lot after-hours.



## AMERICAN ROUNDUP

What they hadn't counted on was someone stealing more than 90 Christmas trees or the random acts of kindness that followed.

Others in the area have stepped forward, dropping off additional trees or donating money since last weekend's theft.

Tire tracks on a nearby field were the only clue about how the trees, worth about \$3,000, were taken.

Proceeds from the Christmas tree sale were supposed to pay for improvements at a community ice rink, she said.

## Official not apologizing

**NV** RENO — State Controller Kathy Augustine remains unapologetic after becoming the only elected official in Nevada history to be impeached and convicted of malfeasance in office. She returned to the Capitol to complete her remaining two years. She told the Reno Gazette-Journal that she's eager to resume her political career and won't rule out a congressional campaign in 2006. She admitted violating state ethics laws and was fined \$15,000.

## Judge offered on eBay

**NY** NEW YORK — A Manhattan housing court judge, whose picture was posted in an advertisement on eBay as putting



## Tubular Christmas

George Wenderoth, of Wayne, N.J., front, this year's oldest tuba player at 82 years old, plays along with more than 400 tuba players from across the United States in the 31st annual "Merry Tuba Christmas" performance in New York's Rockefeller Center.

him up for sale, said he did not find the posting funny.

The ad for Judge Jeremiah R. Klein, accusing him of miscarriage of justice, depicted him sitting in the courtroom, smiling.

The judge said he was "outraged" by the posting, which eBay took down within about 90 minutes of finding out about it.

The ad, titled "Judge for Sale," was posted by Janet Schoenberg, the disgruntled litigant in a landlord-tenant dispute in New York City Civil Court who said Klein was mishandling the case and that she exhausted other ways of drawing attention to her case.

She maintained, however, that she meant the ad as a joke. "I didn't expect anybody to actually bid on this," she said. "It was satire, it was parody."

After four days, the best offer for the judge was \$127.50.

## Senator out of race

**AZ** PHOENIX — State Senate President Ken Bennett says he won't run for governor in 2006. Bennett, a Republican, said he's shelving his earlier consideration of a run for the office now held by Gov. Janet Napolitano, a Democrat. At least two other prominent Republicans have said they may run for governor.

## Inmates' calories cut

**GA** ATLANTA — The state Department of Corrections is cutting the average number of calories female prisoners may consume each day by about 20 percent to 2,472. The policy doesn't affect male inmates who still get about 3,000 calories. Critics say the policy discriminates. The National Academy of Sciences recommends roughly 2,200 calories per day for teenage girls and active women.

## Persuading constituents

**OH** CLEVELAND — Mayor Jane Campbell is trying to sell Ohio voters on casino gambling after they've already rejected two such referendums. Campbell is pitching a plan that would allow cities to decide whether to build a casino, rather than relying on a yes or no vote to legalize gambling in Ohio. Supporters must gather more than 330,000 signatures from registered voters to place the issue on the November 2005 ballot.

## Mail bomb sentence

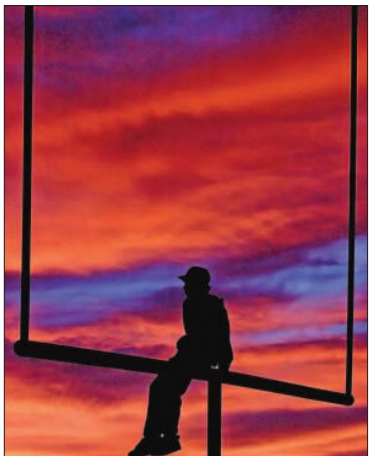
**PA** ERIE — A man was sentenced to five years in federal prison for mailing a bomb made out of matches, gunpowder and a mousetrap to a man dating his ex-girlfriend.

Authorities said no one was injured by the bomb sent by Robert Reichard, 44, of Edinboro. The man who received it in November 2003 took it to state police and a bomb squad blew it apart with a water cannon.

Investigators linked Reichard to the package partly because a letter accompanying it contained the same misspelling — "we" instead of "know" — as letters and threatening e-mails he had previously sent to his former girlfriend and her new boyfriend.



**Under mom's watchful eye** A Siberian tiger named Sinda, left, and one of her cubs sit behind a tree at the Louisville Zoo in Louisville, Ky. It was the first day the cubs were available for public viewing.



**Just hanging out** Carlos Sandoval sits on top of a football goal post as the sun sets in Hyrum, Utah. Sandoval said that he climbed the goal post while waiting to meet some friends.





**Winter fun** Chris Perham, 18, left, and Andrey Melkonyan, 19, both students at Lees-McRae College, ride their makeshift sled down a snow-covered hill on the campus in Banner Elk, N.C.



**Pink lady engineers** Team coach Dave McNamara works in the pit area on a robot with the all-girls team A.F.A. Engineers from Amherst Middle School, in brightly colored wigs, during the New Hampshire state finals of the FIRST LEGO League held at Nashua High School North in Nashua, N.H.



**Holiday march** Children dressed in traditional costume march in the procession leading to Mass during the Festival of Our Lady of Guadalupe at the Robeson County fairgrounds near Fayetteville, N.C.

## Prenatal help on way

**VA** RICHMOND — Virginia is among five states awarded federal grants to help doctors and nurses identify women who suffer depression while pregnant and after giving birth.

Perinatal depression "is something women try to hide," said Mary Zoller, a policy analyst for the state Department of Health's Division of Women's and Infants' Health. "They are ashamed of it."

"You have this baby, and it is supposed to be a wonderful thing, but they are not feeling good about it. Women may be reluctant to ask for help."

Virginia will use its \$250,000 grant from the U.S. Human Resources and Services Administration to develop a Web-based training tool on perinatal depression.

This type of depression has received attention in recent years because of high-profile cases in which mothers killed their young children. In 2001, Andrea Yates of Texas drowned her five children in a bathtub and her attorney argued she suffered from postpartum psychosis.

## Dangerous stockpile

**PA** ERIE — An alleged militia leader who authorities claimed built a bunker on his land and stockpiled weapons for a showdown with federal agents was sentenced to nearly 3 years in prison.

George Bilunka, 60, pleaded guilty in August to possessing unregistered firearms — two homemade land mines, a modified rifle and a homemade machine gun.

He also acknowledged that he and another alleged militia leader sold a copy of a Sten gun — a British-made World War II 9 mm machine gun — to an undercover federal agent for \$300.

## Jesus statue vandalized

**TN** KNOXVILLE — A marble statue of the infant Jesus and his mother that stands in front of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Knoxville was vandalized, authorities said.

Someone cut off the baby's head and arms and doused the stumps in red paint. The vandal or vandals also threw the baby's head through a glass door, scrawled an upside-down cross on Mary's robe and covered her face with paint.

"In this season, when we're getting ready for the birth of Christ, to have these two images defaced and destroyed like this is disturbing," said the Rev. Vann Johnston, a priest in the diocese.

## Arrest shocking

**CA** SAN FRANCISCO — Hans Aaland has for years been Livermore's living oddity — riding a 12-foot-tall unicycle in a jester hat, passing out protest leaflets, addressing the City Council on the "beauty of the community," and spouting revelations from God.

The 46-year-old man had a few run-ins with the law as well, but some people who know him say they were shocked nonetheless by his arrest on suspicion of killing his father.

Police say Aaland smothered his father, Kristian Aaland, as the father slept in the bedroom of the home he shared with his son and wife. Hans Aaland told his mother

what he had done, left a confession note full of biblical quotations and walked away from the home, police said.

Kristian Aaland, 80, an eccentric former scientist at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory who buried a boxcar in his front yard as a bomb shelter during the Cold War, was found dead after his wife called for help, said police Sgt. Jim Subielski.

## Two injured by boulder

**HI** KAPOLEI — Two people were injured when a boulder from a quarry rolled down a hillside and collided with their sport utility vehicle on the H-1 freeway in West Oahu.

The boulder, measuring five feet across, landed in the westbound lanes of the freeway near the Makakilo offramp.

Grace Pacific Corp. said the boulder was accidentally dislodged by a bulldozer widening a berm at its Makakilo quarry site.

The man and woman in the SUV suffered leg injuries, according to Capt. Kenison Tejeda, a Honolulu Fire Department spokesman.

They were taken to The Queen's Medical Center in serious condition, but were later upgraded to fair condition.

## Bear chokes to death

**TX** ABILENE — One of the two American black bears at the Abilene Zoo died after apparently choking on a piece of meat.

Boo Boo's body was found after the bears were fed. Once the second bear, Teddy, 13, was moved, the zoo staff made a quick examination and confirmed that Boo Boo, 9, had died.

Dr. Clay Hilton, the zoo's consulting veterinarian, said Boo Boo must have eaten quickly and regurgitated a large, unchewed piece of meat that lodged in his windpipe.

Boo Boo was known for his never-ending quest for snacks and his cool dips in a pond.

## Slughter violations

**NC** RALEIGH — State agricultural officials say they have found two major butchering operations this year where animals were slaughtered outdoors, either by the landowner or by his customers, and sold.

Both those cases will be criminally prosecuted, at least one as a felony, a rare event for the Department of Agriculture. Officials say they had one similar case in each of the two previous years, and both were handled with fines.

State inspectors say immigrants, many of whom don't know about state laws regulating food, are pushing the demand for illegal butchering.

## Bed donations

**MN** MINNETONKA — The Radisson Hotel chain is donating its old beds as it installs 90,000 new ones throughout its system in the United States, Canada and the Caribbean. The beds, mostly one and two years old, will be donated to nonprofit agencies that will take at least 200. Nearly half of the beds have been spoken for. The company is switching to the new beds over the next two years.

Stories and photos from wire services



## OPINION

## U.S. military equipped with outspoken GIs

Edward Lee Pitts deserves a Pulitzer Prize. And Thomas Wilson should get a Silver Star.

Pitts is the reporter from the Chattanooga (Tenn.) Times Free Press who last week infiltrated

## Zev Chafetz

Donald Rumsfeld's troops-only "town meeting" in Kuwait and planted a question about the insufficiency of defensive equipment in the Iraqi theater.

A Tennessee National Guardsman, Wilson, served as Pitts' mouthpiece. He stood up and demanded to know if the secretary of defense was aware that some American units had to scavenge for protective armor and what did Rumsfeld plan to do about it.

A Pentagon spokesman initially denounced Pitts and Wilson for breaking the rules of journalistic engagement. But the question hit a nerve and drew cheers from the audience.

Most of these meet-the-secretary events are meaningless morale sessions, but this was different. Wilson's fellow Guardsmen cheered him not only for raising a troubling question but for having the brass to do it.

Rumsfeld, to his credit, handled the question pretty well. His reply — you go war with the army you have, not the army you'd like to have — was blunt but honest. So was his admission that no amount of

armor will save every single soldier.

Rumsfeld's critics are now assailing him for sounding crass. But a certain amount of hardheadedness goes with his job, especially in wartime. Rumsfeld is in charge of spending American lives in the pursuit of victory. That's a heavy burden.

Hand-wringing and false tears don't help. Still, there is a limit to even Rumsfeld's candor. The secretary of defense didn't say, as he could rightly have, that the U.S. Army sends its troops into combat with fantastic technological advantages. Anyone who was a soldier even a decade ago marvels at the equipment American soldiers have, from night-fighting gear to computers, from protecting Kevlar to state-of-the-art scopes. When the U.S. military goes up against Arab insurgents — or the Iraqi army — there is simply no comparison.

This is as it should be. War isn't a game. Fairness isn't a goal.

On the contrary, the whole point is to gain an overwhelming advantage.

Despite its shortcomings, the Pentagon has largely done that job. By any standard short of perfection, American troops are astonishingly well-provisioned and equipped — a fact attested to by the relative ease with which they win their battles.

It's worth remembering, though, that great hardware is not the only explanation for American military superiority. Democracy, it turns out, is not simply the most pleasant form of government. It is also the most ruthlessly efficient — especially in wartime.

Within hours of the Rumsfeld town meet-



ing, the entire American media set up a hue and cry about what's missing in the Iraqi theater. After initial spluttering about a lack of resources, the Pentagon (inspired no doubt by an embarrassed secretary of defense) started talking about stepping up production of armored vehicles at home and greater attention to the safety of troops in the field.

This kind of public-driven improvement doesn't take place in the armies of America's adversaries, which are led by friends

and relatives of dictators. Loyalty, not competence, is what counts in these armies. Soldiers who ask questions are punished. Soldiers like Thomas Wilson who ask them publicly are shot (if they're lucky). Same for cheeky reporters like Edward Lee Pitts.

Guys like Pitts and Wilson keep the Pentagon and the generals honest. In the end, they are a source of American military strength no less than the extra armored vehicles that will — thanks to them — be moving down the assembly line for Iraq.

Zev Chafetz is a New York Daily News columnist.

## With Internet, 'permanent record' no idle threat

BY EDWARD WASSERMAN

It was a little matter, but the implications were big. Some years ago a student at a small college was interviewed for an undergraduate reporting project on weapons. (Both student and school shall go unnamed here.) He was brash and foolish, and he bragged about his collection, which he liked to keep close at hand. He was quoted at length; he sounded like a jerk. The article was posted on a departmental Web site.

Now, years later, it can be unearthed instantly by anybody with Internet access. If you Google the kid's name, the first entry that pops up makes him sound like Travis Bickel from "Taxi Driver." Hire him! A prospective employer would more likely call security. So the alumnus appealed to the school to help.

Which it can't, even if it wanted to. The feathers are out of the pillow, the toothpaste out of the tube. An incalculable number of copies of that item lurk on the Internet. There's even a vast Invisible Web where dead Web sites live on. Expunging the record isn't an option.

Such is the Internet's underside: an incapacity to forget. In cyberspace, information has two qualities that it has never quite had before: It is imperishable — and it is universally accessible. The combination has a disturbing potential that the usual norms of news media, which create so much information, never anticipated.

For reasons of law and custom, the media traditionally insist on a fairly clean distinction between public and private. They accept restrictions on poaching in the private sphere. But they insist that they're entitled to report on anything that's "public."

Fortunately, that's a right, not a reality. As a practical matter, much of what's techni-

cally public remains effectively private — from your age to the juicy details of your divorce, from how many cars you own to what your house is worth. Even police records: Bad as a tiny fraction of arrests go unpublished to the wider world. Maybe that's bad. But maybe that makes it easier for people to go forth and sin no more.

So we're used to dwelling, most of us, in a zone of relative obscurity, and not just with personal data. Within limits we could mess up — streak across campus, tear down the goalposts, get into a barroom punch-up — and even if it made the local paper, our sins would be soon forgotten. That "permanent record" we were warned about has largely been a phantom.

Not any longer. The comfort of relative obscurity is giving way to the glare of immediate accessibility.

Elements can be saved. Governments can enact Web-access rules to public databases.

Colleges can decide that the young should be able to make fools of themselves with impunity, and withhold student chronicles from the Net.

But the news media exist to make things public. The real challenge is theirs, because the Internet fundamentally challenges some of the basics of what news is.

Take the assumption that news is about informing people right now.

No longer. Now news is indistinguishable from archive. With every deadline, newsrooms are building a globally accessible store of information that's here for keeps. It better be right. That means mistakes must be fixed zealously, no matter how long ago the original report ran, even if nobody complains. Those papers may be landfill, but the error is still hanging there in cyberspace, fresh as ever, wrong as can be.

Likewise, consider follow-through: How can you report an arrest without ever noting

that the charges were dropped and the defendant acquitted? Routine neglect like that was tolerable only because we assumed that the matter would soon be forgotten. But nothing is forgotten that way. On the Internet, that arrested person will remain under a cloud forever.

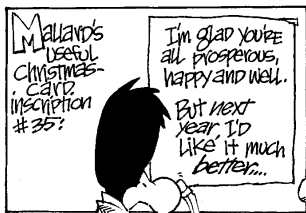
In the disturbing sci-fi movie "Strange Days," technology enables raw experience to be recorded. Not just pictures and sound, but sensation and emotion, can be played back. Our jilted hero keeps replaying — literally reliving — the thrill of a doomed affair. The result is that he never gets over his ex. The memory never fades.

There is a mercy to forgetfulness, just as there is to averting our eyes. The Internet gives us a great deal, but it is destroying both options, and we have no ready way to restore those vanishing mercies.

Edward Wasserman is Knight professor of journalism ethics at Washington State University in Lexington, Va. He wrote this column for The Miami Herald.

## Mallard Fillmore

BY BRUCE TINSLEY





# Horoscope

We're days away from the magical winter solstice, and the sparkling qualities of the season are starting to flair. Venus has danced into Sagittarius, igniting wonder in the young and desire in the more mature. There's so much to want this time of year. Mercury retrograde helps with the "make your list and check it twice" part.

## TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (December 17)

Your year ahead is filled with romance, easy communication and a firm footing at home. Those feeling the holiday pinch in their wallets this winter will get a much welcome dose of financial stability just in time for tax season. Shopping spree in May and August are fun upgrades to your lifestyle — as long as you plan ahead for them! Your lucky numbers are: 16, 17, 30, 45, and 22.

## ARIES (March 21-April 19)

Tensions arise when your priorities don't match those of your loved ones. The best time for a family talk is over dinner. Topics that are tough to swallow go down easier with something sweet. Stressed spelled backward is dessert!

## TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

Add beauty and balance to your home through the judicious use of color, texture and placement. Books on the art of feng shui can help you harmonize your living space and keep positive energy flowing in the right direction.

## GEMINI (May 21-June 21)

The future is an infinite succession of news. Avoid fuzzy thinking and self-deception. Your clear vision today will help build a solid foundation for tomorrow. Quiet your mind to get to the center of what's real.

## CANCER (June 22-July 22)

A financial situation that's been quietly simmering in the background may become more worrisome, but only temporarily. Allow your intuition to guide you to an answer.

Supportive stars help you achieve a more grounded reality.

## LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

Reassess your situation. You may realize

you need to throw out the old rule-book and play a whole new game. If you haven't done so already, now is perfect for adjusting your boundaries and setting goals for the coming year.

**VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)** A sparking opportunity emerges, allowing you to indulge the creative side of yourself, which you've been suppressing for far too long. You like a challenge, but why make things unnecessarily difficult? Take yes for an answer.

**LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23)** Beautiful air signs like you are extra sensitive to sound waves. You can lift yourself out of a funk by creating good vibrations. Listen to some uplifting music or birds flying south for the winter.

**SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21)** You're being pulled by subtle yet opposing forces. A nurturing, feminine influence quietly urges you to bring something to fruition, while a disruptive, masculine influence helps you make sure your strategy is solid.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)** Your head and your heart are likely to be in conflict. Your heart will win, so you may as well give in to it! If you've been holding back on telling someone your care, the planets are on your side.

## CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

21) Mother's advice turns out to be right! You are in prime position to benefit greatly through the wise counsel of a female family member or perhaps the clan patriarch. Light a candle in memory of your ancestors.

## AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

You feel as though a woman in your life is trying to pick a fight with you, perhaps over an issue concerning money or prestige. Take the high ground — accept that she still loves you, and forgive her moods.

## PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

Make a conscious effort to tune in to your loved one. You'll be rewarded with romance, compassion and more than a little bit of magic. Keep some watercolors and a brush on hand, too — your cup brims with creative inspiration.

## CREATORS SYNDICATE

## Holiday Mathis



Calvin and Hobbes

Jump Start

Zits

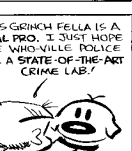
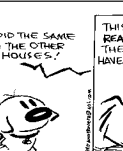
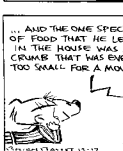
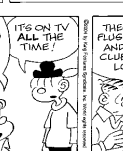
Cathy

Hi and Lois

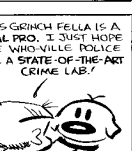
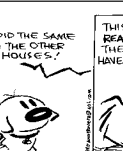
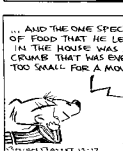
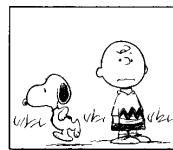
Beetle Bailey

Red and Rover

Better or Worse



## Peanuts





Fotrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



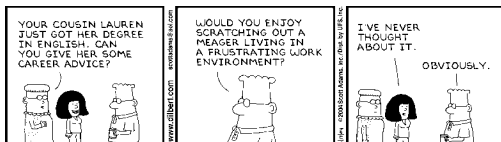
Spider Man



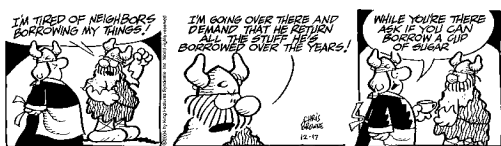
Blondie



Dilbert



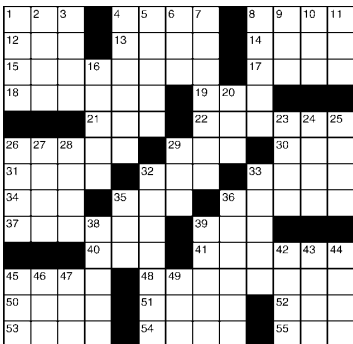
Hagar



Garfield



## Eugene Sheffer Crossword



## Across

- 1 Computer key
- 4 Kind of palm
- 8 Comedian
- 12 Animation frame
- 13 Oklahoma city
- 14 Vicinity
- 15 Delightful
- 17 Nibble away
- 18 Go up against
- 19 Tackle moguls
- 21 Theatergoers'
- 22 Holy
- 26 A place to
- 29 Attention getter
- 30 Acapulco gold
- 31 Information
- 32 Regis' wife
- 33 Musical based on "La Bohème"

## Down

- 1 Canyon comeback
- 2 Leak slowly
- 3 Put your hands together
- 4 Admits
- 5 Wing, maybe
- 6 Hodges of baseball lore
- 7 Homer's story
- 8 Prestidigitator
- 9 Grecian vessel
- 10 Meadow
- 11 Ally McBeal's field
- 16 Picked a winner?
- 20 Bandleader
- 21 Kyser
- 23 Some deer
- 24 Sea eagle
- 25 They're often connected
- 26 Dumbfounded
- 27 One's performances
- 28 Pithy saying (Abbr.)
- 29 Explanation
- 32 "Holy cow!"
- 33 Less commonplace
- 35 "CSI" evidence
- 36 Archimedes' outcry
- 38 Dome home
- 39 Earthy pigment
- 42 Relinquish
- 43 Access to
- 44 Rapunzel
- 44 "Born Free"
- 45 Lioness
- 46 "What have we here?"
- 47 Humor
- 49 Ball-bearing item

## Answer to Previous Puzzle



12-17

## CRYPTOQUIP

LH YMKKC BV F WFA  
VKCWHE HE ZFGKELSEK'W  
AFO, S CKYJHE OHB MFZK

LH WFO "LFJK MKFCLT"  
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WORDS OF WOE FROM A FAILING DIETER MIGHT BE "A WAIST IS A TERRIBLE THING TO MIND."

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: L equals T

# Press charges against Fiancee

**Dear Abby:** My fiancee, "Monique," has put me into financial ruin. It's all because of this girl she has been hanging around with, "Tracy." Monique's friends have warned her to stay away from Tracy because she's had

Abby, the two of them have been kicking money. Monique has also forged my name on my own checks, and sold my personal items — things left to me by my grandparents. For years, people have urged me to press charges.

Monique and I have two children, 3 and 2. I spoke to a lawyer and I will have no problem getting full custody.

Monique is on one year's probation and has to pay restitution because she stole from her employer. She is American; we live in Canada. With all the stuff that's happening, Monique may have to leave the country.

Monique's parents have told me I should press charges.

Monique wasn't like this until she met Tracy. Should I press charges, or should I just say goodbye, take the kids and go my way? A mutual friend says Monique told her that if I do that, she will forget the kids, and find a new guy and have kids with him.

— **Stressed Out**

**Dear Abby**



**Dear Stressed Out:** I'm glad to write and I'm pleased to help end your ambivalence. Listen to your common sense as well as to what Monique's parents are urging you to do.

Protect yourself and the kids. Press charges. Tracy's not responsible for your fiancee's behavior. Your fiancee appears to have no conscience. Jail time won't help her mend her ways, but it will slow her down.

**Dear Abby:** Last week, we invited a couple for dinner this week. Two days before the party,

I called to confirm the time and they said they'd be late.

On the evening of the dinner, they showed up two hours late without even a phone call. They said the husband had to work late. Neither of them offered an apology. We had tried twice to contact them before we finally decided to go ahead and eat. They seemed offended that we did.

We were wrong to assume they weren't coming? If you haven't heard otherwise, how long should you wait for guests before eating without them?

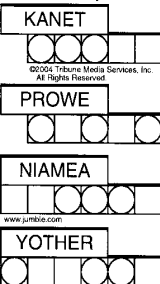
— **Tired of Waiting in Virginia**

**Dear Tired of Waiting:** You were not wrong to assume that your guests were no-shows and to have eaten dinner. That they failed to call and inform you that they had been delayed was rude. Thirty minutes is long enough to wait for tardy guests — or less if there's danger the meal will be overcooked.

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 6940, Los Angeles CA 90069. Readers can write to http://www.ueppress.com/dearabby. Universal Press Syndicate

## JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



www.jumble.com

Yesterday's Jumbles: NOOSE SURLY JARGON UNFOLD  
Answer: A tournament golfer tries to avoid this — THE 'FORE' GROUND

## THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Argrin



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

# Visions should not be dismissed

**Dear Annie:** This is in response to "Worried Grandma," whose 12-year-old grandson, "Zach," was having visions. Your immediate advice was for the boy to be hustled off to a neurologist. You have done this child a disservice by your knee-jerk assumption that he has some type of mental problem.

There is another possibility that should not be overlooked: The boy may be psychic. Please take a look at the larger picture, and acknowledge the fact that there are those who have abilities far beyond yours and mine.

— **Paranormal Advocate**

**Dear Advocate:** Many readers were confused that we recommended a neurologist, so let's clear that up. Visions such as those described by the grandmother could signal that the boy has a brain tumor or other neurological disorder. We felt it was necessary to rule out serious medical concerns, and that is

**Annie's Mailbox**



why a neurologist was the appropriate referral. We heard from many readers who were convinced the boy's visions should be celebrated. Read on:

**From California:**

My ESP started at a year of age, and it has been 50-plus years of dealing with others' biased attitudes. If you feel the urge to refer this family to a doctor, at least refer them to a parapsychologist.

**Washington:** As a child, I saw stacked translucent colored cubes.

When I was older, I used to see a long-haired female folk singer strumming her guitar. I discovered these were "auras" before my panic attacks. I've been on an anti-anxiety anti-depressant for years now with excellent results.

**Madison, Wis.:** Zach's visions could be past life regression.

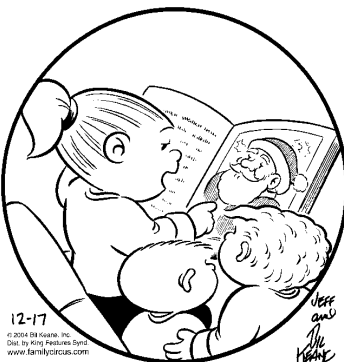
sion. It is wonderful this teen was so intuitive and spiritual that he could remember a previous life without being regressed or hypnotized.

**Bainbridge, N.Y.:** Zach may have some incredible gifts that he should be taught to cherish. He should be put in touch with a religious community in which he could explore what may be a blossoming spirituality.

**East Coast:** When I moved into my new home, I had visions of an old woman with a skinny cat. It happened whenever I washed the dishes. I consulted a spiritual medium who told me I was seeing the former owner of the home. Ten years later, I met someone who knew the owner and said she had a cat and loved her kitchen.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to anniesmailbox@comcast.net, or write to: Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles CA 90045. Creators Syndicate

## Family Circus



"Santa can speak any language in the world."



**Domis the Menace**



**The Far Side**



**Non Sequitur**



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# Jones sues BALCO's Conte for comments

BY DAVID KRAVETS  
The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Olympic track star Marion Jones has filed a defamation lawsuit against Victor Conte and challenged the BALCO head to take a lie detector test regarding his accusations that she used performance-enhancing drugs.

Jones is seeking \$25 million in the suit filed Wednesday in U.S. District Court in San Francisco, alleging Conte tarnished her reputation when he made the statement broadcast Dec. 3 on ABC's "20/20."

Conte and three others connected to the Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative were indicted in February by a federal grand jury for a variety of alleged offenses, including illegally distributing steroids.

The suit said Jones passed a lie detector test and includes a statement from her doctor saying she never used steroids. Jones won three gold medals and two bronzes during the 2000 Olympics.

Conte's statements, the suit said, "are false and malicious."

In an e-mail to The Associated Press, Conte said the lawsuit was "nothing more than a PR stunt by a desperate woman, who has regularly used drugs throughout her career. I look forward with all confidence to the court proceedings as I stand by everything I said on the '20/20' special."

Jones' lawyer offered Thurs-

day to pay for Conte to take a lie detector test and wants three weeks of observation of him:

■ Did he observe Jones injecting herself with performance-enhancing drugs on April 21, 2001, as he stated on national television?

■ Has he ever leaked any grand jury testimony or other evidence related to the BALCO investigation?

■ Has he ever observed Marion Jones illegally taking any performance-enhancing drugs?

Conte, BALCO vice president James Valente, track coach Rami Korchemny and Greg Anderson, the personal trainer for baseball slugger Barry Bonds, face federal indictment on a range of accusations. The federal charges include distributing steroids, possession of human growth hormone, money laundering and misbranding drugs with intent to defraud. All have pleaded innocent.

Conte told ABC: "I think she made her decision, and she's going to have to be accountable to the consequences of her decision. If she said she didn't use drugs, then she lied."

Jones' lawsuit says she has passed 160 drug tests, including five during the 2000 Olympics, and "has never taken banned performance-enhancing drugs."

It claims that Conte's motive to concede steroid distribution ahead of his criminal prosecution "appears motivated by a desire to curry favor with prosecutors, garner sensationalized media atten-



Marion Jones

tion, bolster Conte's own financial and other self interests and harm an individual against whom Conte has a long-standing grudge."

The five lawyers representing Jones in the lawsuit wrote that Conte "seeks to take full credit for all of her past successes, falsely asserting that Jones' five Olympic medals in 2000 were the product of his illegal drug regimen instead of Jones' true talent."

Jones failed to win any medals last summer in the Athens Olympics. She has been under investigation for months by the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, which has said it will take Conte's allegations into account.

The founder of Burlingame-based BALCO, Conte said he worked with Jones from August 2000 to September 2001. He said he designed a doping regimen for her that included the previously undetectable steroid THG, the endurance-enhancing hormone EPO, human growth hormone and insulin.

# Miller 3th in training for Val Gardena event

The Associated Press

VAL GARDENA, Italy — France's Antoine Deneriaux solidified his position as the man to beat in Saturday's Val Gardena downhill with another strong performance in training Thursday.

Deneriaux, winner of this World Cup classic the past two years, finished second behind Norbert Holzknecht.

Holzknecht, a relatively unaccomplished member of Austria's "Wunderteam," has only registered one top-10 finish in his career, ninth here last year in his first World Cup season.

Deneriaux was 0.23 seconds behind Holzknecht, with Austria's Werner Franz third, 0.30 seconds back. Franz won last weekend's downhill in Val d'Isere, France.

Overall World Cup leader Bode Miller posted the 13th fastest time, although the American braked sharply before crossing the line to get an earlier starting spot. Skiers sometimes think that an earlier or later starting position will provide better course conditions, depending on weather forecasts and other factors.

Miller was the second of the first two downhill and leads the discipline standings.

With six wins in 10 races overall this season, Miller is dominating the entire World Cup circuit, leading Austrian rival Hermann Maier by 391 points in the overall standings.

## Two face manslaughter charges in skier's death

ANNECY, France — The French coach and the starter present when French ski racer Regine Cavagnoud was killed in a training accident will both be charged with manslaughter, judicial officials said Thursday.

Coach Xavier Fournier and starter David Fine are to appear before a court in this alpine town before the summer.

Cavagnoud, the super-G gold medalist in the 2001 world championships, collided with German coach Markus Anwander on the Pitztal glacier in Austria in October 2001 while training with the German team.

Fine allegedly cleared Cavagnoud to start without being sure that his German counterpart, Tjessim Peranic, had warned Anwander that Cavagnoud was beginning her descent. Peranic will not be charged.

Cavagnoud, who also allegedly wasn't warned of Anwander's start, crashed into him at 50 mph. She died two days later.

Fournier and Fine are also set to appear, along with the French Ski Federation, before a court in Innsbruck, Austria, for involuntary injuries to Anwander, according to Dominique Delafon, lawyer for the two. The date for that trial has not been set.

## Australia calls it 'football'

MELBOURNE, Australia — They'll be playing "football," not "soccer," in Australia now on.

The Australian Soccer Association is changing its name to Football Federation Australia, a sym-

## Sports briefs

bolic move that chairman Frank Lowy said Thursday is meant to bring the country into line with the majority of the world.

The United States, Canada and New Zealand are among the few countries that call the sport "soccer."

Lowy said the wording change is a significant step in improving the sport's profile ahead of the start of next year's new national competition, the A League, and World Cup qualifying.

One casualty might be the traditional nickname of the national team: the Socceroos.

## U.S. woman fastest in downhill

VAL D'ISERE, France — North American women excelled in a World Cup downhill training session Thursday, posting the day's fastest three times. Bryna McCarty of the United States clocked the quickest time in 1 minute, 43.18 seconds, followed by Canadian Emily Brydon in 1:43.39 and Lindsey Kildow of the U.S. in 1:43.46.

Kildow won a downhill and was third in a super-G in Lake Louise, Alberta earlier this season.

McCarty's teammates, Caroline Lalive and Kirsten Klack, joined her in the top 10. Lalive was 0.56 back while Klack trailed by 0.9.

## Czech Republic wins ROSNO Cup hockey opener

MOSCOW — Tomas Vlasak scored the game-winning penalty shootout Thursday to give the Czech Republic a 4-3 victory over Sweden in the opening match of the ROSNO Cup hockey tournament.

Sweden's Cristian Berling tied it 3-3 with 12:45 left in the third period.

The ROSNO Cup is a successor of a once famous Izvestia Cup.

## Janitor charged with stealing medals from swimming hall

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — A janitor has been charged with stealing more than 100 Olympic medals and other memorabilia from the International Swimming Hall of Fame, including Hollywood star Johnny Weissmuller's 1924 medals and an ancient Greek medal.

Paul Nichols Christow, 48, was charged with two counts of dealing in stolen property and two counts of grand theft over \$100,000, he was allegedly seized medals valued at nearly \$500,000, police said Wednesday.

The scheme was discovered after the medals were sold to a collector over the Internet. The collector contacted the Hall of Fame after acquiring the medals won by Weissmuller, who played Tarzan in the movies during the 1930s and 1940s.

Police traced the theft to Christow, set up a sting, and caught him on tape trying to sell more Olympic goods. He was arrested last week.

Investigators have recovered about half of what was stolen.

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## Bryant: I'll give Shaq an apology

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Los Angeles Lakers star Kobe Bryant wants to apologize to former teammate Shaquille O'Neal for mentioning his name during a police interview last year.

Bryant appeared on ESPN's "Pardon the Interruption" and "NBA Shootaround" on Wednesday and said he never meant to bring up O'Neal's name when he was being interrogated by police officers.

The interview came after a woman accused Bryant of raping her.

"I would apologize for any harm that I brought him and his family," Bryant said of O'Neal.

The Heat will play the Lakers on Christmas Day, the first meeting of the two teams since O'Neal was traded. Bryant wants to speak to O'Neal then.

Bryant was accused of sexually assaulting the woman at a Colorado resort where she worked in June 2003. The Lakers star maintained they had consensual sex. Prosecutors dropped a sexual assault charge against Bryant on Sept. 1 after the woman said she no longer wanted to participate in the criminal case. She had filed a civil suit against Bryant about three weeks earlier.

During Bryant's interview with investigators, he said he heard O'Neal had paid up to \$1 million to various women to keep quiet about situations like his own. O'Neal, who now plays for the Miami Heat, dismissed those allegations as "ridiculous." There have been no published reports of O'Neal ever being accused of any sex crimes.

The former Lakers center was informed of Bryant's allegation last September, and the relationship between the two was strained throughout the 2003-04 season. After the season, O'Neal demanded to be traded.

"I never intended in any way to mix him into my troubles and difficulties that were going on at the time," Bryant said Wednesday. "Things kind of got blown out of proportion and people really ran with that stuff. I just apologize to him for that."

Bryant said he has passed the word to O'Neal through a mutual friend that he would like to discuss the matter.

"December 25 sounds like a good day to me to kind of talk to him and tell him I was wrong in any kind of way to bring any of his personal business out," Bryant said.

Bryant also answered questions Wednesday about the recent spat with another former teammate, Karl Malone. Bryant has accused Malone of knee surgery on Bryant's leg after he had a pass at his wife at a game last month.

"To me it's water under the bridge," Bryant said Wednesday. "I just kind of want to move on from it. We just go our separate ways."

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# Pedro introduced as Met, takes jobs at Sox

By HAL BOCK  
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — After helping the Boston Red Sox win their first title in 86 years, Pedro Martinez will try to lead the New York Mets to their first championship since 1986.

Martinez was introduced at Shea Stadium on Thursday, a day after he passed his physical and the Mets finalized his \$53 million, four-year contract.

"It was more of a commitment from this team than it was money, actually," Martinez said. "I gave Boston every opportunity to actually get me."

Martinez turned down a \$40.5 million, three-year offer from the Red Sox and told his agent Monday to work out a deal with New York.

"Boston wouldn't pull the trigger," he said. "Why did they have to wait until the last minute or so?"

Martinez, a 33-year-old right-hander, has had shoulder problems at times but he



Pedro Martinez wears his new New York Mets cap during a news conference at Shea Stadium in New York on Thursday.

passed the physical conducted Wednesday in New York.

"This is an exciting day for the New

York Mets family," general manager Omar Minaya said. "I am going to go to war with Pedro Martinez on my team."

During parts of his seven seasons in Boston, Martinez often was allowed to arrive at the ballpark later than other players and to take extended vacations during the All-Star break. New Mets manager Willie Randolph plans to speak with Martinez about rules.

"You don't have a lot of rules, but there are certain things that everyone has to abide by," Randolph said Wednesday. "You can't have a different set of rules for different people."

Willie Randolph played with Martinez's older brother, Ramon, with the Los Angeles Dodgers. Randolph remembers Pedro as a young kid coming up in the Los Angeles organization.

"Willie, I know a lot of people might try to confuse you with a lot of things," Martinez said.

In response to question in Spanish, he answered in Spanish: "Pedro Martinez is

an employee who takes pride in his work," he said. "Pedro Martinez is a man of his word."

Martinez went 16-9 with a career-high 3.90 ERA last season, when the Red Sox won their first World Series title since 1918, and was 117-37 in seven years with Boston.

Minaya said the Mets next will try to add offense, focusing on first base and right field, as they try to reach the playoffs for the first time since losing the 2000 World Series to the Yankees.

Mike Cameron, dressed as Santa Claus as he gave out Christmas presents to children Wednesday at the stadium, was at first surprised about Martinez's decision to sign with the Mets.

"I don't know the situation, but when it's all said and done, Pedro is a fierce competitor," Cameron said. "The guy's been a winner and he's been a great adversary. He'd be a great addition to the New York Mets."

## Nats: D.C. has until Dec. 31 to reach deal

NATS, FROM BACK PAGE

Council Chair Linda W. Cropp proposed the private financing amendment, which was approved 10-3 after she threatened to withhold support from the overall package, which then passed in a 7-6 vote.

"I am not trying to kill the deal," Cropp said. "I'm putting some things out there. I'm really disappointed with what I got from Major League Baseball."

The September agreement estimated the cost of building the ballpark and refurbishing RFK Stadium at \$435 million, but critics claimed it would cost far more. The proposal, as initially ap-

proved by the council on Nov. 30, called for Washington to issue up to \$531 million in bonds to cover the cost.

"We had a deal. I believe the deal was broken, and the dream of 33 years is now once again close to dying. I would say close," Williams said.

Meanwhile, some of the communities that had lost out in the bidding for the team prepared to resume their efforts to lure the franchise.

"If the opportunity arises for the Expos again, we are going to be standing there along with everyone else," said Will Somerindyke Jr., head of a Norfolk, Va., baseball group.

Somerindyke's organization has returned the deposits it collected on nearly 100,000 season tickets and almost 100 luxury boxes during its drive to get the Expos. He didn't think it would be difficult to get those deposits back.

"We are impressed and encouraged that major league baseball had the fortitude to say that what Washington, D.C., did was unacceptable, and clearly contrary to the terms upon which D.C. was awarded the franchise," Drew

Mahalic of the Oregon Sports Authority said.

Northern Virginia's group had hoped to build a ballpark near Dulles International Airport.

"We hope that the District of Columbia will be able to fulfill the terms of its agreement and succeed in bringing Major League Baseball back to this region," Virginia Baseball Stadium Authority spokesman Brian Hannigan said.

Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman went to baseball's winter meetings last week and trying to attract attention to his efforts to lure a team. But he could not offer a firm stadium plan.

"It's just a glint in my eye, at this point," he said.

Washington has lost teams twice before. The original Senators became the Minnesota Twins after the 1960 season and the expansion Senators moved to Texas 11 years later.

"Here we are back where we were five years ago — the nation's capital, the center of the world, a city of possibility, aspiration and ambition and opportunity, and a city that cannot do what it says it's going to do," Williams said. "I'm saddened that we can go so far in five years and step back so far in five minutes."

## Mariners use \$50M to lure 1B Sexson

The Associated Press

SEATTLE — The Seattle Mariners added power to one of the weakest lineups in baseball Wednesday, agreeing to a \$50 million, four-year contract with free agent first baseman Richie Sexson.

"This is first and foremost where I wanted to be," said Sexson, who is from Brush, Prairie, Wash. "In the back of

my mind, and for my family, we knew this is where I wanted to be."

Sexson, a career .271 hitter, said he also considered offers from Baltimore and the New York Yankees.

He's coming off a frustrating injury-shortened season with the Arizona Diamondbacks. He hurt his left shoulder on a check-swing and didn't play after May, batting .233 with nine homers and 23 RBIs.

"That was the worst experience I've ever gone through as an athlete," Sexson said. "Pride takes over, then guilt. It sure helps to have family around you to say it's not your fault because it sure feels like it is."

He's confident his shoulder is ready after extensive physical exams by Mariners doctors. Work leaked this week at the winter meetings that a deal was close, but the agreement was delayed by three days of rigorous tests.

Despite the injury, his proven power made him an attractive free agent. Sexson, who turns 30 on Dec. 29, hit 45 homers for Milwaukee in 2001 and 2003. He has 200 career homers and posted four 100-RBI seasons.

Sexson is so excited about Seattle that he's willing to move to left field, if it helps the Mariners win. In his first full season in the majors, with Cleveland in 1999,

he made 40 starts in left and 53 at first base.

Seattle is still negotiating with free agent first baseman Carlos Delgado and third baseman Adrian Beltre.

**Yankees discuss Johnson**

NEW YORK — The Yankees and Arizona Diamondbacks spoke Wednesday about Randy Johnson for the second time in three days, and New York moved closer to finalizing contracts with free-agent pitchers Carl Pavano and Jarl Wright.

Yankees president Randy Levine spoke with incoming Arizona chief executive officer Jeff Moorad a second time, a baseball official said on condition of anonymity.

No new proposals were exchanged during the conversation, and the two planned to speak again, the official said.

Also Wednesday, the Yankees and agent Scott Shapiro agreed that Pavano's deal will include a team option for a fifth season and that the contract will guarantee the right-hander \$39.95 million.

**Bradley begins sentence**

CUYAHOGA FALLS, Ohio — Los Angeles Dodgers outfielder Milton Bradley began serving a three-day jail sentence on Wednesday for driving away while being issued a speeding ticket more than a year ago.

Bradley's appeal in the case where he was exhausted last year when the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that the trial judge did not unfairly sentence him.

Bradley, 26, was a member of the Cleveland Indians when he was charged with driving 52 mph in a 25-mph zone when he was arrested in 2003, 30 last year in northeast Ohio.

Police said Bradley was issued a speeding ticket but would not sign it, rolled up his window and drove away.

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# Wake looks ordinary in struggling past Elon

The Associated Press

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. — Wake Forest coach Skip Prosser didn't want to talk about his team.

Who could blame him? Perhaps calling looking ahead to No. 14 Texas, the sixth-ranked Demon Deacons were downright ordinary against overmatched Elon on Wednesday night. And whether starting forward Vytas Daniellus plays against the Longhorns is anyone's guess.

Prosser sent Daniellus to the locker room with 16 minutes left in the 55-67 victory over the Phoenix. Prosser wouldn't discuss what happened, and Daniellus said he didn't know.

"It was Coach's decision," he said. "I didn't conduct myself as a Wake Forest basketball player."

Chris Paul had 14 points and 11 assists and Kyle Visser added 13 points for the Deacons.

"Rather than talk about what we didn't do, Elon deserves credit," Prosser said. "I thought the Elon kids played really, really well. I thought they took it to us the whole game."

Asked about Daniellus' status against the Longhorns on Saturday, Prosser said he didn't know. Williams sprained his ankle and said he expects to play against the Longhorns.

Levy came down hard on his left arm while committing a charge to foul out. "I don't feel bad," Paul said. "A win's a win."

The Demon Deacons (8-1) struggled to put away Temple on Monday night and also played sloppily against Elon, trailing about 4 minutes into the second half. Justin Gray made a three-point shot. Trent Strickland followed with two free throws and the defensively challenged Demon Deacons showed some bite.

Elon (2-7) ended five of its next six possessions with a turnover, and the other featured a badly missed three-pointer by Montell Williams. Twice, Wake Forest's press forced traveling violations before the ball reached midcourt. Still, Elon hung in, getting within eight points on a layup by Chris Chalko about 5 minutes left. The Deacons finally sealed it with seven straight points, including a basket by Visser off Paul's 11th assist.

Paul, a sophomore, also had six steals.

Chalko had 16 points and Scottie Rice added 15 for Elon, which had lost seven of eight.

"There is no such thing as a moral victory," Elon coach Ernie Nestor said. "The best thing you



**Wake Forest's Chris Paul (3) drives past Elon's Scottie Rice (11) for a basket during the second half of No. 6 Wake Forest's 55-67 victory Wednesday night.**

do in a season cannot be a loss, you must win games. But we're not going away from tonight feeling that this was a total wasted effort."

Wake Forest continually pounded the ball inside and outscored Elon 48-22 in the paint, with Visser leading the way. The 6-foot-11 center nearly matched his season- and career-high of 15 points that he had earlier this season against Yale, the only previous time he scored in double figures. "When he plays like he's 6-11, he's a very positive asset for us," Prosser said.

**No. 3 Georgia Tech 72, James Madison 47.** At Atlanta, Iowa. Muhammad scored 14 points and Jarrett Jack added 13 to lead the Yellow Jackets (7-0), who struggled offensively but had another strong defensive effort. Leading scorer B.J. Elder, averaging 18.7 points, managed only four on 1-for-7 shooting in 25 minutes and Will Bynum had 10 on 2-for-9 shooting in 28 minutes. Georgia Tech entered the game allowing 51 points per game, fourth-best in the country.

Ray Barbosa had 15 points for the Dukes (2-4), who lost their fourth straight.

**No. 12 N.C. State 78, La-Lafayette 72.** At Raleigh, N.C., Andrew Brackman scored 20 points and Julius Hodge 16 for the Wolfpack (8-0), who have their best record since going 9-0 in 1981-82.

Tiras Wade scored 37 points and hit five three-pointers to lead the Ragin' Cajuns (3-5). Wade hit two free throws and then made a contested, double-pump three-pointer to pull Louisiana-Lafayette to 74-72 with 6.9 seconds to go. But Cameron Bernerman made two free throws to put the game away.

**No. 14 Texas 85, Texas-Arlington 70.** At Austin, Texas, P.J. Tucker had 17 points and 10 rebounds for the Longhorns (7-1), who won for the 34th time in 35 home games. Texas shot 56 percent in taking a 52-29 halftime lead.

Jarrett Howell scored 24 points for the Mavericks (4-3).

# One Miss picks an SC man

## Orgeron, USC's defensive line coach, takes top job; Solich headed to Ohio Univ.; Wannstedt out at Pitt

The Associated Press

OXFORD, Miss. — Ed Orgeron's recruiting success at Southern California helped him land the job as Mississippi's football coach.

"We are going to teach our young men to compete,"

Orgeron said during a news conference on Thursday. "We're going to compete from the time we get up in the morning until the time we go to bed."

The Rebels hope the 43-year-old Louisiana native can use his ties to the Deep South to lure talented recruits to Oxford and reinvigorate the Ole Miss program with the tough, punishing defense that became a Southern Cal staple.

Orgeron was USC's defensive line coach, an assistant head coach for two years and the closest thing the school had to a defensive coordinator; head coach Pete Carroll is in charge of the Trojans' defense.

Orgeron also was USC's recruiting coordinator for four years.

"This is the beginning of the Orgeron era at Ole Miss, and it's going to be a successful one," chancellor Robert Khayat said.

Orgeron's hiring capped the Rebels' two-week search for a replacement for David Cutcliffe, who was fired Dec. 1 after his first losing season at Ole Miss.

Orgeron's candidacy surfaced shortly after Cutcliffe's firing. Last week, he openly campaigned for the job and called it a perfect fit for his family.

Orgeron has been a coach on three national championship teams — two under Erickson at Miami (1989 and 1991) and last



**Ed Orgeron comments during a news conference Thursday. Orgeron, a USC assistant, was hired as football coach at Mississippi.**

year at USC.

Top-ranked USC plays No. 2 Oklahoma in the Orange Bowl on Jan. 4.

Cutcliffe was fired after a difficult season in which he struggled to replace quarterback Eli Manning and refused to make major staff changes after going 4-7. Cutcliffe was 44-29 in six seasons at Ole Miss, 25-23 in the SEC, and just a season removed from going 10-3.

**Source: Ohio U. hires Solich**

ATHENS, Ohio — Former Nebraska coach Frank Solich has been hired as football coach at Ohio University, The Associated Press learned Wednesday night.

Solich, who turned down the

coaching job at Army after last season, said Wednesday night he could not comment on the report.

Solich was fired by Nebraska after the 2003 season despite a 58-19 record as the successor to Tom Osborne, who retired in 1997 after winning three national championships in his last four seasons. Osborne, now a U.S. congressman, was 49-2 in those final four seasons, leaving Solich with an almost impossible task of maintaining that success.

Solich, an assistant under Osborne from 1979 to 1997, led the Cornhuskers to the national championship game in the 2002 Rose Bowl, a 37-14 loss to Miami.

Nebraska was only 7-7 the next year, the school's first season since 1961 without a winning record. Solich was fired the next season despite going 9-3. Assistant Bo Pelini then coached the Cornhuskers to a 17-3 victory over Michigan State in the Alamo Bowl.

After Bill Callahan, Solich's replacement, was fired, the school where he played and once was an assistant coach.

Wannstedt, who resigned as the Dolphins' coach Nov. 9 after Miami lost six of its last nine games, was believed to be the front-runner to succeed Walt Harris at Pitt. But Wannstedt called Pittsburgh athletic director Jeff Long on Thursday morning and pulled his name out of consideration.

# Ex-pyques question Zook hiring

The Associated Press

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. — Former Illinois football players are questioning whether the school searched hard enough for a black or minority coach to replace Ron Turner before hiring recently fired Florida coach Ron Zook.

The 62 former players wrote a letter to athletic director Ron Turner on Nov. 22, the day Turner was fired, asking him to "enact a search process that includes several African-American candidates and other coaches of color." They attached a list of candidates.

Copies of the letter were sent to interim Chancellor Richard Herman and members of the university's board of trustees.

"We wanted to make sure there was a system in place for fairness in opportunity for the head coaching job at the University of Illinois," Eric Rouse, a starting wide receiver in the late

1970s, told The (Champaign) News-Gazette. "We didn't want the South Carolina situation where Lou Holtz says, 'I retire. Here's Steve Spurrier, head coach.' That's not fair."

The former players say they aren't upset that Guenther hired Zook, but they aren't happy about the perception that Zook's hiring was a done deal before the application deadline for candidates.

Zook's hiring was announced less than 24 hours after that Dec. 6 deadline.

"That's what got our ire up," Rouse said.

Former Illini running back Howard Griffith said he believes Guenther hired the person he thought would be best for the job. But Griffith said he also believes the hiring process was not as open as it should have been.

"We know the offer didn't come until one minute after 5 o'clock," Griffith said. "But you

know a hand was shaken probably Tuesday or Wednesday. That's what reasonable people would think."

"We know (Guenther) interviewed Leslie (Frazier) and Kirby Wilson at the end of the process. We would be safe in assuming a handshake deal was done before that. You would figure," he told the newspaper.

Frazier is defensive coordinator for the Cincinnati Bengals and Wilson is running backs coach for the Arizona Cardinals. Both are black.

Guenther came out of the office Wednesday afternoon and did not immediately return a call for comment from The Associated Press.

Herman, the interim chancellor, approved Zook's hiring, as did the school's equal employment opportunity committee.

"I know who was in the final five. There was clear representation of black coaches and we wound up with the best person," Herman told the AP Wednesday.

# Michigan craves better result in Rose

BY LARRY LAGE  
The Associated Press

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — They posed for pictures with Paris Hilton, rubbed elbows with NBA stars and enjoyed Los Angeles' nightlife.

Then, Michigan was dominated by Southern California at the 2004 Rose Bowl.

This time, the Wolverines insist they'll have a businesslike approach while preparing for the Rose Bowl because they want to come home with a win over Texas, not just off-the-field stories.

"That's the biggest issue and guys realize that from day one," Roy Manning said Wednesday. "If you go out there, it's great that you get there. But if you don't win, it's almost like not even making it out there."

The 15th-ranked Wolverines (9-2), the winningest team in college football, will face No. 6

Texas (10-1), a storied program, for the first time in Pasadena, Calif.

"It's special," Tim Massaquai said. "It's two great programs with a lot of tradition playing for the first time so there's going to be a lot of hype surrounding it."

Michigan will play in a bowl for the 30th straight season, the nation's longest active streak, and its ninth straight game on New Year's Day.

The Wolverines are led by a school-record four AP All-American players — receiver Braylon Edwards, center David Baas and defensive backs Marvin Jackson and Ernest Shaver.

AP All-American linebacker Derrick Johnson leads Texas' defense while running back Cedric Benson and tackle Jonathan Scott — both of whom made the AP's second team — are the stars on offense.

"They are very talented," Michigan coach

Lloyd Carr said. "We are faced with the best football team we've played this fall, and we've got to play our best game."

Larry Harrison Jr., a contributing defensive tackle, will not join his teammates next week when they travel to California, and Adam Stenavich, a starting offensive tackle, might be left behind.

Harrison was suspended after he was arrested and charged with indecent exposure earlier this month.

Stenavich was arrested for disorderly conduct last month in Marshfield, Wis., his hometown.

"Adam Stenavich has not practiced in the last few practices because I suspended him pending finding out exactly what happened there," Carr said. "I'm hoping that in the next day or two I will have all the information, and at that point I'll make a decision on whether or not he accompanies the team to Los Angeles."

## Tennessee out to renew bowl success

BY ELIZABETH A. DAVIS  
The Associated Press

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Tennessee's last two trips to bowl games turned into disappointing failures.

The Volunteers hope a few changes will help them finish this season as winners.

A loss to Auburn in the Southeastern Conference championship sent No. 15 Tennessee (9-3) to Dallas for the Cotton Bowl to play No. 22 Texas A&M (7-4) on New Year's Day.

The Vols are appearing in their 16th straight bowl and 13th under coach Phillip Fulmer, who is 6-6 in the postseason.

Tennessee lost 30-3 to Maryland in the 2002 Peach Bowl and 27-14 to Clemson in Atlanta last year.

Fulmer believes the problem then was focus.

"Arguably, we're at least as good as both of those teams and maybe better, and we didn't play

*"We're tired of going to bowl games and losing. We still have something to prove."*

Gerald Riggs  
Tennessee RB

as well as we would have liked to have played," he said Wednesday at Tennessee's bowl media day.

"Those two teams were excited about playing Tennessee. I don't think we were so excited about playing those two teams. I think our team is really excited about playing Texas A&M."

In a small change from previous years, Fulmer has planned two lengthy scrimmages during bowl practice on campus before the team has a holiday break and

reconvenes in Dallas on Christmas Day.

The Vols will scrimmage for about 60 plays Thursday and about 40 plays Saturday when Tennessee's first team will face the second-teamers simulating the Aggies' offense and defense.

"We have scrimmaged some but not to that number of plays," Fulmer said.

With exams finished and school out for the holidays, the players only have to worry about football. Tailback Gerald Riggs believes being more relaxed and having fun helps the team stay focused.

"We want to win. We're tired of going to bowl games and losing. We still have something to prove," Riggs said. "Tennessee has been known as a team [that] they're pretty good but once they step out of conference in a bowl game, they kind of shoot themselves in the foot. We want to get that tag off of us."

Fulmer hopes the extra practice time will help shore up the continuing problems in the secondary, which he says is the team's "Achilles' heel." Players with nagging injuries will get a chance to rest for the game.

Freshman Brent Schaeffer is trying to work himself back into the rotation at quarterback after not playing since he broke his collarbone on Oct. 30. Junior Rick Clausen, who started the last three games, will start in the bowl.

Erik Ainge, who separated his shoulder in the Notre Dame game on Nov. 6, will not be ready to play.

This is Tennessee's sixth trip to the Cotton Bowl. The Vols are 2-3, with their last win over Arkansas on Jan. 1, 1990.

Tennessee lost to Kansas State 35-21 in its last trip to Dallas to cap the 2000 season.

The Vols will have their hands full with the Aggies, another Big 12 team with an option quarterback, Reggie McNeal.

"We've got to match their intensity. The Cotton Bowl is a great traditional game for the old Southwest Conference and Big 12 people," Fulmer said. "They're going to be really excited about playing in it and playing against Tennessee. We've got to be the same way."

### AP Division I-AA All-American Team

#### FIRST TEAM

**Quarterback** — Land Campbell, Willingham & Mary, senior.  
**Running backs** — Charles Anthony, Tennessee State, senior; Clinton Davis, Miami Southern, senior; Justin Knight, Virginia State, senior; Vincent Jackson, North Carolina, senior.  
**Tight end** — Adam Bergen, Lehigh, senior.

**Lineemen** — Ben Bantziridge, Furman, senior; Deanech Workman, senior; Buster Ashley, Western Michigan, senior; Michael Mackenzie, Southern Illinois, senior; Matt Magerko, James Madison, junior.  
**All-purpose** — Jerome Mathis, Hampton, senior.  
**Kicker** — Jon Schiffo, Southwest Missouri State, senior.

**DEFENSE**  
**Lineemen** — Tom Alankar, Weber State, senior; Harold Wells, senior; Jeff Babin, senior; George Calhoun, junior; Lee Bainger, Weebster, senior.  
**Linebackers** — Norman Williams, Illinois State, senior; Jamal Johnson, North Carolina, senior; Jeffery Williams, Northeastern, senior.

**Defensive backs** — Ted Korryguy, Fordham, senior; Shannon James, Mesa State, senior; Kenny Williams, senior; Tony Polk, sophomore; Alonzo Treasudo, Southern, senior.

**Punter** — Paul Ernsater, Northern Arizona, senior.

#### SECOND TEAM

**Quarterback** — Dustin Long, San Houston State, senior.  
**Running backs** — Oscar Bonds, Jacksonville State, senior; Jason Braxton, Jacksonville State, senior; David Ball, New York, senior.  
**Wide receivers** — David Ball, New York, senior; Ray Gaudin, Middle Tennessee, senior; William A. Smith, Jr., Middle Tennessee, senior.

**Tight end** — Ray Gaudin, Middle Tennessee, senior.  
**Lineemen** — Chad Patton, Montana State, senior; Chad Motte, Georgia Southern, junior; Adam Bourque, Western, senior; Cory Proctor, Montana, senior; Adam Washington, junior.  
**All-purpose** — Eric Kimble, Eastern Washington, junior.  
**Kicker** — Craig Coffey, Southern Illinois, sophomore.

**DEFENSE**  
**Lineemen** — Tom Alankar, senior; Sean Connor, Bucknell, junior; Mike Murphy, Montana, sophomore; Marcus Loric, Eastern Illinois, senior.  
**Linebackers** — Jordan Babin, Cal Poly, senior; Kevin Kealey, North Carolina, senior; Mike Williams, North Carolina, senior; Mike Williams, North Carolina, senior; Kevin Kennedy, senior; Alexis Moreland, Jacksonville State, senior.

**Defensive backs** — David Huggabrook, Delaware, senior; Tony Williams, Middle Tennessee, senior.  
**Punter** — David Simonoff, Southeast Missouri, sophomore.

#### THIRD TEAM

**Quarterbacks** — Erik Meyer, Eastern Washington, junior.  
**Running backs** — Travis Glasford, Northern Illinois, junior; Jay Davis, Davis, Drake, freshman.  
**Wide receivers** — Tim Huggins, Southeast Louisiana, junior; Aaron Pugh, San Houston State, senior.  
**Tight end** — David Fletcher, Columbia, senior.

**Lineemen** — Adam Turner, Georgia Southern, senior; Dustin Baker, Ohio, senior; Chris Pettus, Jacksonville State, senior; Chris Louder, Jr., Montana State, senior.  
**Linebackers** — Brian Edwards, Harvard, senior.  
**Defensive backs** — Greg Kuehn, Williams & Mary, junior.

**DEFENSE**  
**Lineemen** — Roy Ravelino, Furman, senior; Tom Parks, Delaware, senior; Jamil Butler, Villanova, senior; Adam Connor, Williams & Mary, senior.  
**Linebackers** — Willian Freeman, Furman, senior; Roger Coker, Montana State, senior; Nick DiPadova, Southern Utah, senior.

**Defensive backs** — Darren Barrett, Southeast Missouri, senior; John Bryant, Georgia Southern, junior; Nick Quinn, North Carolina, senior.  
**Punter** — Brian Clayburn, Western Kentucky, senior.

### College football

#### Bowl glance

<b>Tuesday, Dec. 14</b> New Orleans Bowl Payoff: \$750,000 Southern Miss (11) vs. North Texas (10)	<b>Monday, Dec. 21</b> Chancellor's Bowl Payoff: \$500,000 Georgia Tech (6-5) vs. Syracuse (6-5)
<b>Wednesday, Dec. 22</b> OAC Bowl Payoff: \$100,000 Memphis (8-3) vs. Bowling Green (8-3)	<b>Thursday, Dec. 23</b> Fort Worth (Texas) Bowl Payoff: \$500,000 Cincinnati (6-5) vs. Marshall (6-5)
<b>Friday, Dec. 24</b> Hawaii Bowl Payoff: \$750,000 UAB (7-4) vs. Hawaii (7-5)	<b>Monday, Dec. 27</b> MPC Computers Bowl Payoff: \$750,000 Fresno State (8-3) vs. Virginia (8-3)
<b>Monday, Dec. 27</b> Motor City Bowl Payoff: \$750,000 Toledo (9-3) vs. Connecticut (7-4)	<b>Tuesday, Dec. 28</b> Independence Bowl Payoff: \$750,000 Iowa State (6-5) vs. Miami (OH) (8-4)
<b>Wednesday, Dec. 29</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million Texas El Paso (5-7) vs. Colorado (7-5)	<b>Thursday, Dec. 30</b> Payoff: \$750,000 Oregon State (5-7) vs. North Texas (6-5)
<b>Friday, Dec. 31</b> Payoff: \$750,000 Boston College (8-3) vs. Virginia (8-3)	<b>Saturday, Jan. 1</b> Payoff: \$750,000 New Mexico (7-4) vs. Navy (9-2)
<b>Saturday, Jan. 2</b> Payoff: \$750,000 California (10-1) vs. Texas Tech (7-4)	<b>Sunday, Jan. 3</b> Payoff: \$750,000 Purdue (7-4) vs. Arizona State (9-3)
<b>Monday, Jan. 4</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million Boise State (11-2) vs. Louisville (10-1)	<b>Tuesday, Jan. 5</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million Michigan (9-3) vs. Texas A&M (7-4)
<b>Wednesday, Jan. 6</b> Payoff: \$2.75 million Wisconsin (9-2) vs. Georgia (9-2)	<b>Thursday, Jan. 7</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Friday, Jan. 8</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Saturday, Jan. 9</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Sunday, Jan. 10</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Monday, Jan. 11</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Tuesday, Jan. 12</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Wednesday, Jan. 13</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Thursday, Jan. 14</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Friday, Jan. 15</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Saturday, Jan. 16</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Sunday, Jan. 17</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Monday, Jan. 18</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Tuesday, Jan. 19</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Wednesday, Jan. 20</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Thursday, Jan. 21</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Friday, Jan. 22</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Saturday, Jan. 23</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Sunday, Jan. 24</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Monday, Jan. 25</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Tuesday, Jan. 26</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Wednesday, Jan. 27</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Thursday, Jan. 28</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Friday, Jan. 29</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Saturday, Jan. 30</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Sunday, Jan. 31</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Monday, Feb. 1</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Tuesday, Feb. 2</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Wednesday, Feb. 3</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Thursday, Feb. 4</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Friday, Feb. 5</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Saturday, Feb. 6</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
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<b>Tuesday, Feb. 9</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Wednesday, Feb. 10</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
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<b>Saturday, Feb. 13</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Sunday, Feb. 14</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Monday, Feb. 15</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Tuesday, Feb. 16</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Wednesday, Feb. 17</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Thursday, Feb. 18</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Friday, Feb. 19</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Saturday, Feb. 20</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Sunday, Feb. 21</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Monday, Feb. 22</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Tuesday, Feb. 23</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Wednesday, Feb. 24</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Thursday, Feb. 25</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Friday, Feb. 26</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Saturday, Feb. 27</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Sunday, Feb. 28</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Monday, Feb. 29</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Tuesday, Feb. 30</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Wednesday, Mar. 1</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Thursday, Mar. 2</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Friday, Mar. 3</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Saturday, Mar. 4</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Sunday, Mar. 5</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Monday, Mar. 6</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Tuesday, Mar. 7</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Wednesday, Mar. 8</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Thursday, Mar. 9</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Friday, Mar. 10</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Saturday, Mar. 11</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Sunday, Mar. 12</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Monday, Mar. 13</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Tuesday, Mar. 14</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Wednesday, Mar. 15</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Thursday, Mar. 16</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Friday, Mar. 17</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Saturday, Mar. 18</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Sunday, Mar. 19</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Monday, Mar. 20</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Tuesday, Mar. 21</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Wednesday, Mar. 22</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Thursday, Mar. 23</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Friday, Mar. 24</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Saturday, Mar. 25</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Sunday, Mar. 26</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Monday, Mar. 27</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Tuesday, Mar. 28</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Wednesday, Mar. 29</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Thursday, Mar. 30</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Friday, Mar. 31</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Saturday, Apr. 1</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Sunday, Apr. 2</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Monday, Apr. 3</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Tuesday, Apr. 4</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Wednesday, Apr. 5</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Thursday, Apr. 6</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Friday, Apr. 7</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Saturday, Apr. 8</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Sunday, Apr. 9</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Monday, Apr. 10</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Tuesday, Apr. 11</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Wednesday, Apr. 12</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Thursday, Apr. 13</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Friday, Apr. 14</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Saturday, Apr. 15</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Sunday, Apr. 16</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Monday, Apr. 17</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Tuesday, Apr. 18</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Wednesday, Apr. 19</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Thursday, Apr. 20</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Friday, Apr. 21</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Saturday, Apr. 22</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Sunday, Apr. 23</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Monday, Apr. 24</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Tuesday, Apr. 25</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Wednesday, Apr. 26</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Thursday, Apr. 27</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Friday, Apr. 28</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Saturday, Apr. 29</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)
<b>Sunday, Apr. 30</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)	<b>Monday, May 1</b> Payoff: \$1.1 million UCLA (11-1) vs. Washington (10-2)



### NFL Challenge

The deadline to enter your picks for the NFL Challenge is fast approaching!

Log in every week during the 2004 NFL Season and make your picks for the winners of the upcoming NFL games. Earn points for every winning team you pick and at the end of the season, you may find yourself the "secret code" from Monday's paper and \$20,000 prize point total for the week!

\*Certain rules and restrictions apply. See the official rules at [www.nfl.com/nflchallenge](http://www.nfl.com/nflchallenge) and on stripes.com. There is no cost to participate, but you must register to play.

Don't drop the ball!

Log in to [www.strikes.com](http://www.strikes.com) or [www.oconus.com](http://www.oconus.com).

Week 15 Pick Deadline:  
12:30 pm, U.S. Central Time  
Saturday, December 18

As a BONUS, prize the top winner each week will receive \$100 toward merchandise at TeamStore.com

TEAMSTORE.COM

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STARS AND STRIPES

OCONUS

# Eagles face nice dilemma

If home field is in hand, team could rest starters

By BOB BROOKOVER  
The Philadelphia Inquirer

PHILADELPHIA — The Eagles might find themselves in a rare situation Sunday after they run through that large inflatable helmet and past the cheerleaders at Lincoln Financial Field.

Thirteen hours earlier, the results from the Carolina-Atlanta game will be in, and if the re-signing Panthers win, the Eagles will have nothing to play for in terms of the standings when they take on the Dallas Cowboys.

Only four teams in the 26 years since the schedule was extended to 16 games have had their division title, a first-round bye and home-field advantage wrapped up before they played their 14th game.

The good news for the Eagles and coach Andy Reid is that three of those teams went on to win the Super Bowl. But they still must figure out how they are going to handle the situation.

Do the starters continue to play? If so, do they play the entire game, half a game, one quarter? Does anyone with even a minor injury get the week off? Reid apparently has already made up his mind about how he's going to handle the game with the Cowboys on Sunday, regardless of the Falcons' result.

"The starters are going to play and that's how we'll approach it," he said Wednesday.

That's fine with the starters. "If I'm going to play, I'll take that," safety Brian Dawkins said. "If he says I'm going to play, then I will take that. In other words, whenever my number is called to be on the field, I'm going to give you what I've got."

Quarterback Donovan McNabb agreed. "I'm a guy who loves playing football," McNabb said. "No matter what decisions Andy makes, I'm going to want to get out there and contribute to get better, so when the playoffs come around, we are at our best and ready to go."

"It always feels good to go out there and be fresh, but you want to keep your chemistry and your timing. If it's playing the whole game against St. Louis or going out and playing against Cincinnati, obviously it's his decision, but I'm going to prepare like I'm playing every game."

Former Eagles linebackers coach Ron Rivera was a member of the 1985 Chicago Bears team that went 15-1. That team remains the only one to have clinched home field throughout the playoffs with four games left.

The Bears, however, had plenty of motivation in their 13th game because they were still unbeaten at the time. They lost their chance to go unbeaten on "Monday Night Football" in Miami, but Rivera, who is in his first season as the Bears' defensive coordinator, said coach Mike Ditka kept things intense for the final three games.

"In '85, we played every game the same, and we practiced the same way," Rivera said. "We were pads every day and we hit every day, especially for our nine-on-seven drills. Our starters played just like any other game and, once the game was in hand, we replaced them with our backups."

"I believe [Ditka] felt the only way to keep our edge was to continue to approach the rest of the season like it meant something. The loss to Miami seemed to take some of the pressure off us and was kind of a wake-up call."

Rivera said Ditka wasn't that concerned about finishing with a 15-1 record after the loss to Miami, but defensive coordinator Buddy Ryan remained determined to make sure the Bears finished the season as the NFL's No. 1 defense.

Ditka's approach worked in that postseason as the Bears rolled to their first Super Bowl title, outscoring their three opponents 91-10. The Denver Broncos and coach Mike Shanahan took a different approach in 1996.



AP

Even if the Eagles have nothing to play for Sunday against Dallas, quarterback Donovan McNabb said, "I'm a guy who loves playing football. No matter what decisions Andy [Reid] makes, as a player, I want to get out there and continue to get better, so when the playoffs come around, we are at our best."

After going 12-1 and clinching home-field advantage in the AFC, Shanahan replaced quarterback John Elway the following week with Bill Musgrave and the Broncos were whipped by the eventual Super Bowl champion Green Bay Packers.

Elway started the next week and played a quarter in Denver's season finale, but the Broncos lost two of their final three games and ended up losing to Jacksonville in their first playoff game.

Interestingly, the coach took a different approach to things in 1998. Even after the Broncos lost their 14th and 15th games of the season and had nothing to play for in their season finale, the coach left Elway in the entire game in the regular-season finale.

The only other team to have homefield advantage wrapped up before its 14th game of the season was the 1984 San Francisco 49ers. They finished 15-1 before winning their second of five Super Bowls by blowing away Miami.

# 49ers QB Dorsey has a taste of success

The Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Ken Dorsey's second season with the San Francisco 49ers has taken a turn for the better. Now he's determined to keep it moving in that direction.

Dorsey will start his second consecutive game Saturday against the Washington Redskins, and he could finish the season at quarterback in place of regular starter Tim Rattay.

Rattay is out with a foot injury and might not play again this season. Dorsey had the best game of his career Sunday, leading the 49ers to a 31-28 overtime victory at Arizona.

That win snapped a seven-game losing streak for the 49ers (2-1), who are looking to salvage something out of a tumultuous season that has featured coaching controversy and plenty of quarterback performances.

"You've had to get to keep your foot on the pedal, just kind of stay aggressive and just make sure you're on top of the ball the whole time," Dorsey said. "I just hope we have a lot of opportunities last week."

Dorsey took advantage, winning for the first time in four career starts. He threw three touchdown passes, completing 18 of 34 passes for 191 yards and guiding San Francisco to the winning field goal on overtime.

Dorsey had struggled in his previous two starts in place of Rattay, failing to lead San Francisco's offense to a touchdown in losses to Seattle and Chicago. He entered last week's game with a quarterback rating of 53.9, a figure lower than any NFL quarterback who qualified for those ratings.

Dorsey's previous struggles this year diminished enthusiasm within the organization that the former University of Miami star could be the 49ers' quarterback of the future. But Dorsey's play last week rekindled some hope.

"He did some really good things and made some really good throws," coach Dennis Erickson said. "He's healthier now and he's got good decisions. He missed some throws, which you are going to do when you haven't played, but he made some good ones to win it."

Dorsey hit receiver Cedrick Wilson between a third- and fourth-down on a three-and-17 play that kept the winning drive alive. Dorsey said it might have been the best throw he has made in the NFL, and it was one he couldn't have made earlier in the year when he was dealing with back, groin and thumb injuries.

"It's kind of a relief just to be able to go out and perform and play well again," said Dorsey, who didn't take a snap last year as a rookie after landing in Miami to have success over there and understand that the hard times aren't always going to be so hard."

# Shanahan says Plummer is staying

By FRANK SCHWAB

The (Colorado Springs) Gazette

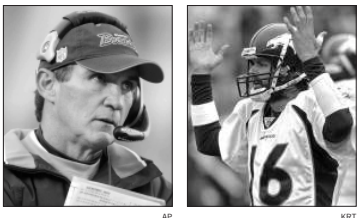
ENGLEWOOD, Colo. — On the same day that Denver Broncos quarterback Jake Plummer continued to answer questions about an obscene gesture he made during Sunday's game against Miami, Broncos coach Mike Shanahan confirmed Plummer is his quarterback for the future.

Shanahan told ESPN on Wednesday that he will exercise the \$6 million option bonus that Plummer is due in March, which means Plummer will be the Broncos' quarterback for next season and likely beyond.

"Jake Plummer's going to be here," Shanahan said, according to ESPN.com. "I like him. I like the way he competes. Normally I don't talk about contracts. But since there's been a lot of attention on him the last couple of weeks, I'm really surprised."

That lays to rest the biggest question about Plummer, who has been under a lot of heat in recent weeks for his spotty play and his controversial gesture.

Shanahan said he hasn't been informed by the NFL if he will be fined for the gesture he made to a heckling fan after he threw a first-quarter interception. NFL spokesman Steve Allen said the league will announce this week whether Plummer will be fined.



KRT

Denver coach Mike Shanahan, above, said the team will exercise the \$6 million option bonus that Jake Plummer is due in March.

The incident was a hot topic during Plummer's weekly news conference.

Plummer was asked again about the gesture. Like he did after Sunday's game, Plummer apologized.

"What happened last week, I think I've addressed well enough on Sunday night and I'm apologetic for it and stand up here as a man and say that will never happen again," Plummer said. "But, any time I've ever made a mistake or I've done wrong, I want to move on and the only

Jake Plummer has thrown 17 interceptions, tied for second-most in the NFL, and 22 TD passes, third in the AFC.

thing I can do is try to correct that. A big win in Kansas City is a right step in that direction."

The Broncos play at Kansas City on Sunday.

Plummer also talked about what caused him to react to the heckling fan Sunday. "You're looking at a guy that's not perfect," Plummer said. "I'm not a robot. I'm a man that's got warm blood that sometimes gets hot in there and runs through my veins. People do things that they regret. As long as you can learn a lesson from it and step up and be

a man about what your actions were and move on, I think that's the true lesson you learn from it." Plummer might not have it easy this week playing at Arrowhead Stadium, one of the most hostile stadiums to visitors. Chiefs guard Will Shields said he didn't know if Plummer would have a tougher time at Arrowhead because he reacted to a heckler last week, and he added the Chiefs' stadium isn't much different than any NFL stadium.

"I think anywhere you go, there's going to be some fan that's looking to heckle people and give us a hard time," Shields said on a conference call with Colorado reporters. "I haven't played in a place that doesn't have one or two or maybe even five or six. That's what they get their kicks out of, trying to be difficult and trying to affect your play on the field."

One point Plummer made a few times during his conference was that a lot of the criticism of him would subside a bit if the Broncos win at Kansas City.

Plummer has thrown 17 interceptions this season, tied for second-most in the NFL. He has also thrown 22 touchdowns, which is third in the AFC, and is on pace to throw for 3,998 yards. Plummer said he thought he has the support of plenty of Broncos fans. "I think there's still a large [group] of people that are happy I'm here," he said.



# Witna to run Bengals' surging offense

## Last season's starter takes over while Palmer rests sore knee

BY KEVIN GOHEEN

Scripts Howard News Service

CINCINNATI — Jon Kitna stepped into the news conference room underneath Paul Brown Stadium and did a double take. The last time he spoke in the room last season, he did so behind a lectern with one microphone. Now the room has an interview platform with a table and chairs for multiple speakers to sit on during an interview.

"I want my podium back," Kitna said.

A few hours later, up to the seats hobbled Carson Palmer. A brace on his left leg, protecting the strained MCL he suffered during last Sunday's 35-28 loss at New England, Palmer leaned the crutches he used to enter the room up against a wall and managed himself up the couple of steps to the table.

"I think I got ditched those on Saturday, so I'm taking forward to that," Palmer said, an indication of the possibility he'll

play this Sunday when the Bengals host the Buffalo Bills. "It's looking bleak for this weekend, but right now I'm set on playing (Dec. 26) against the Giants. The only thing that's going to hold me back is if they (medical staff) won't let me play."

"It's getting stronger every day and I'm trying to keep as much pressure off of it but at times I'm testing it and seeing where it's at and it's getting stronger. I'll be ready to play next weekend."

Bengals head coach Marvin Lewis said Wednesday the team's decision on whether to start Kitna or Palmer will wait until Sunday. But his young quarterback beat him to the punch.

"I'd be pretty shocked," said Palmer about playing. "It would be great. I'd love it. But I'd be pretty shocked."

So, apparently, in steps Kitna to retake control of an offense that in the past three games has produced at least 453 yards and averaged 37.7 points. No one expects the

production to be any less against the Bills, even though Buffalo has the No. 3-ranked defense in the league.

"The last time we had some uncertainty as to who was going to play, we scored 58 points, so I don't think that's going to be an issue," Kitna said, referring to the Bengals' 58-48 win against Cleveland on Nov. 28. Palmer suffered back spasms during the week, missed practice time and was listed as probable on the injury report for that game.

"We add new wrinkles here or there, but we do what we do whether Carson is in there or I'm in there. So I don't think there's going to be a disruption to the flow of the offense or anything like that. The stuff we've been doing this year is stuff that we've been doing for the last couple years."

Kitna replaced Palmer in the third quarter of New England and completed nine of 13 passes for 126 yards, with one touch-



Last season, Bengals quarterback Jon Kitna (3) had career highs in touchdown passes (26) and passing yards (3,591). Carson Palmer expects to play on Dec. 26.

down and one interception. Palmer was knocked out of the game after being hit by Patriots defensive lineman Richard Seymour as he released a pass.

# Bulger might play at Arizona

The Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — Marc Bulger tested his sprained right shoulder for the second time this week on Wednesday, giving the St. Louis Rams some hope he might return to the lineup.

Bulger missed Sunday's game at Carolina, and his backup Chris Chandler had a career-worst six interceptions. So, there's urgency for Bulger to play with the Rams (6-7) one game back in the NFC West entering Sunday's game at Arizona. On Wednesday, Bulger threw about a dozen passes in an individual drill after throwing several warmup tosses. He threw about three-quarters speed and a bit side-arm, but it was enough for coach Martz to exclaim, citing Bulger's jersey number, "10's back" after the first pass.

Bulger didn't participate in any team drills, but the plan is to gradually increase the work load and then make a decision on his availability, perhaps on Friday.

"I don't know what to tell you because he actually threw the ball much better today than I would have predicted," Martz said after practice. "He feels like he can zip it, but we just asked him to refrain from that."

Martz said Bulger, who has a little trouble on the follow through, has a wrist problem on the follow through.

## Bears LB Urlacher unlikely to play

LAKE FOREST, Ill. — Brian Urlacher missed practice Wednesday and his latest hamstring injury is expected to keep the Bears' linebacker out of Sunday's game against Houston.

## NFL injury update

Injuries to prominent NFL players, followed by team's prognosis. (See Page 24 for complete injury report provided by the league.)  
**Packers** LB Naili Duggs (bruised kidney) probable.  
**Giants** RB Akeem Williams (neck) likely out for the season.  
**Penguins** CB Shaun Spriggs (concussion) out for Saturday's game.

"It's not looking good," coach Lovie Smith said Wednesday.

## Steelers' Bettis thinking about retiring

PITTSBURGH — Jerome Bettis is thinking about retiring.

The Pittsburgh Steelers running back said his health — not whether the Steelers win the Super Bowl — will determine whether he plays in 2005. Bettis missed significant playing time in 2001 and 2002 with groin and knee injuries, but hasn't missed a game since then.

Bettis, the NFL's No. 6 career rusher with 13,037 yards, has flourished as a part-time running back the past two seasons.

He ran for 811 yards in 2003 despite backing up Amos Zereoue for six games and has 647 yards and a career-high 12 touchdowns this season, including four consecutive 100-yard games while replacing the injured Duane Staley.

"I'm not getting any younger," said Bettis, who will be 33 in February. "Every time we win it means a lot more because it could be the last one."

"If it is, it is. I'm not going to be the sentimental guy to cry after every game."

## Redskins PK Hall done for season

ASHBURN, Va. — Washington Redskins kicker Phil Hall is done for the season

with a torn right quad muscle, his fourth leg injury in three months.

The Redskins signed Jeff Chandler to kick for the rest of the season. Chandler has made 14 of 21 field goal attempts in 10 games over three seasons with San Francisco and Carolina, including two games as a fill-in this season for the Panthers when John Kasay was injured.

Also Wednesday, linebacker LaVar Arrington was released with the first-team defense for the first time in months. He is listed as questionable for Saturday's game at San Francisco.

## Janikowski gets five-year extension

ALAMEDA, Calif. — Sebastian Janikowski finalized a \$10.5 million, five-year contract extension with the Oakland Raiders on Wednesday that makes him the highest paid kicker in the NFL.

The 26-year-old Janikowski, the Raiders' first-round draft pick in 2000, has converted all but three of his 22 field-goal attempts this season for the Raiders (4-9). He is 112-of-140 in his career.

## Panthers P Sauerbrun arrested for driving while impaired

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Carolina Panthers punter Todd Sauerbrun was arrested and charged with driving while impaired, a police spokeswoman said Thursday. Sauerbrun also was charged Wednesday with speeding and driving while his license was revoked, said Julia Rush of the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Department.

The All-Pro player was released Thursday morning on \$1,700 bond, Rush said.

Coach John Fox said Wednesday that Sauerbrun will play Saturday at Atlanta.

# Tice's status seems shaky in Minnesota

BY MARK MASKE

The Washington Post

Minnesota Vikings owner Red McCombs made a rare Monday appearance this week at the club's training facility in Eden Prairie, Minn., saying he was there to attend the annual Christmas party. Being festive, however, couldn't have been easy for members of the organization the day after a potentially season-wrecking loss to Seattle that included an erratic tick play that could end costing coach Mike Tice his job.

McCombs expressed support for Tice but again said he won't make a decision until after the season about whether to exercise the club's \$1 million option for next season in the coach's contract. McCombs said he was not bothered that Tice publicly expressed interest last week in the University of Washington's coaching job.

McCombs said he is foremost a fan and he knew what the team's followers were talking about — the decision to have wide receiver Randy Moss throw a first-down pass from the Seattle 20-yard line that was intercepted in the end zone with just more than two minutes to play in the Seahawks' 27-23 triumph.

"I suspect that in the state of Minnesota, the conversation in every science laboratory, every working crew out building a highway, the guys out at the airport getting ready to fly planes, is going to be the Vikings and why did they have that stupid play there at the end of the game," McCombs said.

# Lacking big plays, Jets' run-oriented attack is grounded

BY ANDREA ADELSON

The Associated Press

HEMPSTEAD, N.Y. — Santana Moss prides himself on being the big-play receiver for the New York Jets.

So how does he feel now that the Jets have hardly hit any long plays in the past few weeks while struggling to score?

"I am coming out there furious sometimes because I think every

time I get out there I can beat someone. But if I don't get the ball, what can I do?" Moss said.

Though Moss avoided saying he was the ball man, he did say how he felt when asked how to be more involved in the offense: "Get back there, throw myself the ball and then I run it," he joked.

Though he has lost Moss and some of his teammates showed frustration with the offense Wednesday following a lack-

luster performance in a 17-6 loss to Pittsburgh. Earlier this week, backup running back LaMont Jordan said the Jets fail to play well in big games and the offense needs to produce.

That means more big plays from the offense, which has relied heavily on the run this season.

In two games since the quarterback returned from a strained right rotator cuff, the Jets have two passing plays for 20 yards or

more, both last week against the Steelers. Moss, the fastest player on the team, has been a non-factor for most of the season, though he does have several drops.

He has a combined four catches in the past two games for 43 yards. Last season, Moss had a career year, going over 1,000 yards with 10 touchdown receptions.

When asked why the Jets have not relied more on play-action

passing, something Pennington does well, some players blurted.

Center Kevin Mawae declined to answer the question, while Moss responded, "If I had the answer I would give it to you clearer, but I don't have it."

"I think we will get back to that," Pennington said. "We will get back to it and mix it up and do what we need to do to win. We know we have to score points. We can't just try to win games 13-10."

# Ravens RB Lewis presses on

BY DAVID GINSBURG

The Associated Press

OWINGS MILLS, Md. — As rewarding as last season was for Jamal Lewis, this one has been just as frustrating.

Lewis won the NFL rushing title in 2003, amassing 2,066 yards — the second-highest total in NFL history. He was selected to play in the Pro Bowl for the first time and was voted Offensive Player of the Year.

His problems began in late February, when federal prosecutors in Atlanta filed charges against Lewis stemming from an attempted drug buy in 2000. Lewis pleaded guilty in October to using a cell phone to set up a drug transaction, an admission that earned him a two-game suspension from the NFL and the loss of \$761,000 in wages.

Three weeks after his return, Lewis sprained his right ankle after getting only two carries in a Nov. 21 game against Dallas. He missed the next two games and played in only the first half last week against the New York Giants, gaining only 32 yards on eight carries.

With three weeks left in the regular season, Lewis has 683 yards rushing — less than one-third his total in 2003 and tied for 26th in the NFL.

Last year he had 12 100-yard games, including an NFL-record 295-yard effort against Cleveland. This year he's topped the 100-yard mark only twice and has gained only 9 more yards on the ground than backup Chester Taylor.

But Lewis is in no hurry for this miserable season to end, because soon after the Ravens are done playing he will begin serving a four-month jail sentence as part of his plea-bargain.

"I've dealt with adversity all my life. I'm not a guy who's going to complain," Lewis said Wednesday. "Right now the whole legal thing is in the past. That's my outlook on life."

But he still can't shake the ankle injury, which limited his practice time Wednesday as the Ravens prepare for Sunday night's game against the Indianapolis Colts.

Lewis' biggest regret is that he hasn't been there for his teammates. Baltimore won the AFC North last year, but now is locked in a struggle to reach the postseason in a wild card.

"I wish I was able to be in those games from a team standpoint," he said. "I still have a chance to hit 1,000 yards, which isn't bad considering I've missed what amounts to five games."

"But it's not about my individual goals or numbers; I just wish I was there to make things a little bit easier for us to get into the playoffs."

The last time he felt this way was in 2001, when a torn knee ligament forced him to sit out the entire season.

"It could have been worse," Lewis said. "I could have missed a whole season again."

Because he's had only 167 carries compared to 387 in 2003,

Lewis won't be bothered by the effect of absorbing a few thousand blows as he prepares for the stretch drive.

"The interruption of the flow is dramatically different for him than last year, obviously," Ravens coach Brian Billick said. "Notwithstanding the injury he's working on, he's got to be healthy and fresh. It's a good time to have him healthy and fresh."

Lewis figures that if he can survive this year, next season ought to be a breeze.

"I don't let too many things bother me. Life goes on," he said. "If you have a setback, it's how you deal with it. What happened to me this year, when I look back on it next year, it will be over and in the past. Why should I go in the tank and worry about it? I'll let everyone else worry about it."



Jamal Lewis was suspended two games for pleading guilty to setting up a drug transaction and will serve a four-month jail term when the season ends. He has also missed two games, and most of two others, with a sprained ankle.

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## SPORTS



Dickau has career-best night to lead Hornets over Warriors, Page 32

# Nationals' deal nearing collapse

## MLB shuts down business operations over financing plan

BY JOSEPH WHITE  
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Baseball's response to Washington's lawmakers was strong, swift and ominous. Or, as Mayor Anthony A. Williams put it: "The dream of 33 years is now once again close to dying."

On Wednesday, Major League Baseball shut down business and promotional operations indefinitely for the team that has been relocating from Montreal. Baseball essentially gave the city 15 days to change its mind about a new financing plan, or else the search could begin anew for a permanent home for the troubled franchise.

At issue is a measure passed late Tuesday by the District of Columbia Council, which voted to approve the Expos' move to Washington if private financing is used for at least half the cost of building a stadium. Baseball has been adamant that a stadium be funded with 100 percent government money up front, as stipulated in a September agreement negotiated with Williams.

"The legislation is inconsistent with our carefully negotiated agreement and is wholly unacceptable to Major League Baseball," said Bob DuPuy, baseball's chief operating officer.

Season-ticket sales were immediately halted, and the 16,000 fans who have made \$300 deposits can ask for a refund. The stadium store, which had sold more than \$100,000 in caps and other merchandise over 3½ weeks, was shut indefinitely at the close of business Wednesday. The unveiling of uniforms with the team's new name, the Washington Nationals, was postponed. A hiring freeze was implemented.

Only the baseball side of the operation will continue to function as usual, although the sudden drop in revenue will hamper general manager Jim Bowden's ability to

sign players.

"Don't expect us to spend a lot of money at this point," team president Tony Tavaras said. "We will continue to try to make the team competitive, but I don't expect to us to be a big buyer."

Washington has until Dec. 31 to work out an arrangement acceptable to baseball. That's when the agreement with the city expires, allowing baseball to reopen the process of selecting a permanent host city. The Council could reconsider its vote in light of baseball's reaction, debating again the issue of how much tax money should not be used to fund a sports facility in a city in dire need of better schools and other public services. Whatever the possible compromises, the days are running short.

"We'll use them all, every minute of

every hour of every day, and all of us move to the middle," Williams' spokesman Chris Bender said. "It's ninth inning, second out, we have to make it happen."

DuPuy did not address where the team would play its 2005 home schedule if the deal with Washington falls through. It remains unclear whether baseball would move the franchise to Washington's RFK Stadium on a temporary basis, remain at Montreal's Olympic Stadium or go to another city.

The developments were stunning to fans who have been waiting for baseball since the Washington Senators move to Texas following the 1971 season.

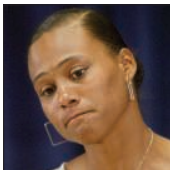
"It's like you're in a 100-yard dash, and you're one yard away from the finish line," said Charlie Brotman, longtime Senators public address announcer and a prominent advocate for baseball's return. "You're beating everybody, and all of a sudden you've got a cramp, and you lose. It's raining on our parade."

SEE NATS ON PAGE 33

## Martinez as sharp with words as pitches



New York Mets' pitcher Pedro Martinez, center, General Manager Omar Minaya, left, and Manager Willie Randolph celebrate at a news conference to introduce Martinez at Shea Stadium on Thursday. Martinez also had some parting shots for the Red Sox. See story on Page 33.



## Jones sues BALCO founder Conte for defamation

Page 29



## Kitna back in charge of Bengals' offense

Page 37

## Orgeron hired as Mississippi football coach Page 34

